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ANOMIE AS SECURITY PATTERN MALFUNCTION:  
A CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and  
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## ABSTRACT

The concept of anomie has occupied a prominent position among concepts of social maladjustment. However, despite this prominence, a good deal of conceptual ambiguity still exists with respect to its proper usage. In this thesis, an attempt is made to forge some conceptual clarity from the literature by isolating and interrelating the common and essential meaning themes that are evident in the various past conceptions of the condition. From this analysis, the general conclusion is made that anomie is best conceptualized as an individual condition involving the perceived breakdown of one's ordering assumptions about the structure of one's social and physical worlds. This event is accompanied by cognitive and evaluative feelings of disorientation and by the emotive aspect of discomfort or anxiety. A theoretical framework is proposed for anomie which incorporates these common meaning themes. Anomie is then reconceptualized with a major emphasis placed upon the adequacy or inadequacy of an individual's security pattern to perform its organizing function.



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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

If the ambiguous usage of a concept varies directly with its age, as some social scientists claim, one would not have to associate the concept of anomie with Emile Durkheim to place its academic origins in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> For, although anomie can claim a prominent position among the plethora of social maladjustment concepts, it is difficult indeed to find any two contemporary scholars who agree on its precise and appropriate usage. A researcher who chose to employ the term in a purportedly orthodox manner would be free to select a sociological unit of analysis or a psychological one; he could also adopt both. In addition, he might use the term interchangeably with any or all of the following constructs; alienation, normlessness, meaninglessness, social disinterest, powerlessness, moral aloneness, social de-regulation, or separation-anxiety.<sup>2</sup> Finally, if he desired to examine the presence of anomic phenomena in society, he could do so at the individual level by employing one of the several scaling instruments available,<sup>3</sup> or at the societal level by factor analysing objective scores for specific indexes of community integration.<sup>4</sup>

The major thrust of this thesis represents a response to the ambivalence apparent in the above situation. Although my interest was initially focussed on the relationship of anomie to "deviant" political behaviour, the multiplicity of anomie conceptions, theories, and operations precluded an effective synthesis of empirical findings. By necessity, my attention turned to the concept formation stage of the



term's usage. With what kinds of things are people primarily concerned when they discuss the phenomenon of anomie? Are there any consistencies in the problems addressed by anomie theorists, or in the theoretical frameworks adopted to study these problems? And finally, is there any way to circumscribe these concerns and forge some conceptual clarity from the literature?

An attempt to provide some tentative answers to these questions is undertaken in the following chapters. The successful completion of this task hopefully will yield a theoretical frame of reference within which existing empirical contributions to the understanding of anomie phenomena might usefully be applied to the concerns of political science. To preface the substantive discussions which are found in later chapters of this paper, the following pages will deal with those assumptions and objectives concerning the formation of concepts, and the anomie concept in particular, which undergird my approach to analysis.

Philosophers of science have had a great deal to say about the processes of concept formation, but the interested student is still faced with a formidable array of often conflicting approaches to the conceptualization of empirical phenomena.<sup>5</sup> To anchor the approach adopted in this paper, it is perhaps useful to introduce the distinction between "intervening variables" and "hypothetical constructs" as suggested by Kenneth McCorquodale and Paul Meehl.<sup>6</sup> According to their proposal, an "intervening variable" represents

. . . a quantity obtained by a specified manipulation of the values of empirical variables; it will involve no hypothesis as to the existence of nonobserved entities or the occurrence of unobserved



processes; it will contain in its complete statement for all purposes of theory and prediction, no words which are not definable either explicitly or by reduction sentences in terms of the empirical variables. . .<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, the authors propose that

. . . the term "hypothetical construct" be used to designate theoretical concepts which do not meet the requirements for intervening variables in the strict sense. That is to say, these constructs involve terms which are not wholly reducible to empirical terms; they refer to processes or entities that are not directly observed (although they need not be in principle unobservable); the mathematical expression of them cannot be formed simply by a suitable grouping of terms in a direct empirical equation; and the truth of the empirical laws involved is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the truth of these conceptions.<sup>8</sup>

For the purposes of this paper, the crucial aspect of the McCorquodale-Meehl distinction concerns the specification of meaning for the two kinds of concepts. An "intervening variable" references a set of observed conditions that, by themselves, set out the meaning of a concept. The "intervening variable" becomes, therefore, merely a convenient summary term, the meaning of which is exhausted by terms representing a particular constellation of observed patterns.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, a "hypothetical construct" references a postulated and unobserved entity or process which is described in terms not entirely reducible to empirical facts.<sup>10</sup> The meaning of such a construct must be inferred from the meanings of terms and relationships through which it is described or explicated. Concept formation in this case involves an inductive process wherein a correlated pattern of observed events may yield an associated but unobserved construct which has a surplus meaning not ordinarily inhering in the original patterned



behaviour. Thus, for "hypothetical constructs," the meaning of a term is neither the same as that of the term's referents, nor is it set out solely by them. Indeed, several theorists may employ the same or similar terms with reference to the same set of observable entities, and yet attach different meanings to these terms.<sup>11</sup>

If for the moment, anomie is considered an "intervening variable," it follows from this discussion that present ambiguities regarding its meaning derive from theorists referencing different states of affairs by the term or from their use of differing forms of combining rules for relating basic terms. However, as argued in Chapter II of this paper, such differences do not appear to constitute a prominent part of the anomie controversy. A review of the literature reveals that theorists have been largely concerned with similar patterns of behaviour, but have employed different frames of reference to explicate the meanings of the terms. In addition, it would appear consistent with their usage of anomie to infer that the term designates unobserved conditions that closely reflect the properties of a "hypothetical construct." The task then becomes one of identifying common meanings among these various anomie conditions which might serve to differentiate anomic from non-anomic phenomena.

It is the major contention of this thesis that historical usage of the anomie term in the literature has consistently reflected a set of meaning themes, which when identified, usefully discriminates patterns of behaviour and contributes to our understanding of that behaviour. To introduce the substantive arguments for this assertion, it may prove useful to review briefly the original conditions of entry



of the term "anomie" into the jargon of the social sciences.

Emile Durkheim's contributions to a theory of anomie must certainly be considered central to any treatment of the term's historical usage. Introducing the concept to modern sociology toward the end of the last century, Durkheim employed the term in a "macro" capacity to denote a societal state of de-regulation - a lack of moral constraints.<sup>12</sup> His conceptual usage of anomie stresses several aspects of interest. The first of these, and perhaps the most important for Durkheim, associated anomie with the absence of those norms within society which ordinarily function to control the limitless desires of "natural man." These controls, according to Durkheim, are not merely consensual agreements to regulate interactions of members within a collectivity; rather they have an existence independent of the membership.

It is not realized that there can be no society unless societies exist, and that societies cannot exist if there are only individuals.<sup>13</sup>

Secondly, Durkheim was concerned with the reactions of individuals to the limitless freedom accorded them in an anomic society. Although this aspect received considerably less treatment than the first, it appears that Durkheim felt that some form of individual suffering accompanied societal anomie. Thus he referred to a "state of perpetual unhappiness,"<sup>14</sup> of "disillusionment,"<sup>15</sup> and of "despair,"<sup>16</sup> as products of the "unhealthy" societal structure.

A third aspect of interest to Durkheim concerned the relationship of societal anomie to the occurrence of deviant behaviour. In his classic study of suicide,<sup>17</sup> the author contended that individuals suffering within an anomic environment will tend to seek a release,



and that this release may take the form of self-inflicted death. Again, the concern with deviance per se is not specifically reflected in this theorist's writing, but rather, it is used as a behavioural index of the degree of anomie present within various societies.

It is argued in Chapters II and III that while Durkheim's original usage of the anomie term has undergone some re-interpretation and refinement by subsequent theorists, the basic themes in his meaning of the term have persisted in this later literature. In particular, theorists have retained his assumption regarding the postulated existence of regulating forces or norms acting upon the individual. Anomie is held to be strongly and consistently associated with the condition of those norms. More importantly, however, later theorists have retained Durkheim's emphasis upon the functional relationship between the postulated norm structure (or perceptions of that norm structure) and the individual's feeling of well-being. Although the assumption is implicit for most of these theorists, all would seem to feel that individuals need to be stably anchored in the social aspects of their lives. The existence and effective operation of a norm structure in society is felt to provide such an anchorage. Anomie is seen to develop when something happens to affect the norm structure or to impede its operation with respect to controlling individual behaviour.

If the above interpretation does in fact reflect a core meaning which is common to traditional users of the anomie concept, one might possibly ask at this point why ambiguity continues to exist with respect to the term's usage. While an adequate answer would probably require an extensive familiarity with the sociology of knowledge, it



will become apparent from the analysis presented in Chapter II that theorists have focussed their attentions upon deficient aspects of the normative structure as the center of their anomic conceptions. Seldom do theorists agree, however, about the major deficiency to be associated with anomic behavioural referents. In my interpretation of the condition they describe (which is summarized above and is examined in detail in Chapter III), emphasis has been placed upon the motivational element which links the normative structure to feelings of well-being. Viewed in this way, anomie may be associated with any one or several of these deficiencies for it is their common relationship to the individual's need for security which initially renders them objects of concern in the anomie context. To my knowledge, only one previous theorist has attempted to approach the anomie problem in this way.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, his treatment of the concept neglected to consider contemporary anomie theory, and has in turn been neglected by contemporary anomie theorists.

If ambiguity has resulted in part from the isolation of different normative conditions as central foci of the anomie concept, the established conceptualization of anomie at two distinct levels of analysis has done little to facilitate the emergence of a common frame of reference. For Durkheim and others, anomie is a condition of the social system.<sup>19</sup> Theorists with a social psychological orientation, however, have conceptualized the condition as a property of the individual.<sup>20</sup> It is a state of affairs or a condition pertaining to one's existence in social contexts. In response to this source of ambiguity, I will argue in this thesis that the conflict is not necessarily



irreconcilable - that the common meaning themes discussed above may have relevant application at both levels of analysis - but that conceptualization at the individual level offers some methodological advantages which are absent at the more "macro" level of analysis.

In Chapter IV of this paper, I will propose a theoretical frame of reference for the anomie concept which attempts to capture both explicit and implicit meaning themes apparent in traditional usage of the term. In emphasizing the motivational sources of anomie, this theoretical conceptualization will draw together diverse conceptions of the condition in a manner which contributes to our understanding of a particular class of phenomena.

The framework adopted in Chapter IV draws heavily upon a theoretical literature dealing with the relationships between psychological motivation and one's perceptual organization of society.<sup>21</sup> At the center of this framework is the notion of a "security pattern" as that concept has been used by Rollo May.<sup>22</sup> In essence, the term "security pattern" refers to that set of organizing assumptions about reality upon which the individual depends for the future security of his need gratifications. The individual's perceptual organization of reality is linked in this way to his feelings of security or well-being and their discomfoting emotional opposites. Anomie is hypothesized to occur when external situations are perceived by the individual to indicate an inadequacy of his "security pattern." As a subjective condition, anomie refers to a state of mind wherein the individual has lost confidence in his "security pattern." He experiences a disorientation with regard to the social aspects of his life which is



reflected in his cognitions and evaluations of that life; at the same time, he also experiences extreme emotional discomfort upon sensing (more or less vaguely) the implications of this disorientation for the assurance of continued need satisfaction.

The opening paragraphs of this chapter stressed the disparate nature of existing anomic conceptions. On previous pages, the claim has been made that a meaningful conceptualization of the condition which circumscribes these various usages of the term is possible within a "security pattern" frame of reference. Chapter V of this paper attempts to provide some pragmatic justification for this claim. While the "security pattern" frame of reference proposes an explanation of the internal dynamics of psychological anomie, it does not specify the empirical social variables that one might want to examine to account for differential occurrence of the condition across and within populations. Because other theorists have made significant contributions in these directions, one might wish to evaluate the usefulness and plausibility of the "security pattern" approach by testing the facility with which it is capable of subsuming these various causal theories. It will be demonstrated in this penultimate chapter that anomie, conceptualized in this way, not only is capable of subsuming and synthesizing these diverse contributions, but it may also be valuable in suggesting new directions for research which have not as yet been explored in the anomie context.

Having set out in some detail my re-conceptualization of the anomie concept, I will summarize the products of this endeavour in Chapter VI and indicate empirical steps which may provide a better means by which to assess the utility of this conceptual framework.



## Footnotes, Chapter I

<sup>1</sup>It would appear that the history of anomie as a term is considerably longer than that of modern social science. Derived from the Greek term "anomia," meaning lawlessness, the term was current among theologians in the seventeenth century, but remained dormant since that time until Durkheim reintroduced it in 1893. See Sebastian de Grazia, The Political Community: A Study of Anomie (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 195. Three spellings of the term are current in the literature. Although various writers have attempted to attach different meanings to these different terms, they have not institutionalized these meaning conventions, and I will thus adopt only the French term "anomie" to refer to the condition in question. Where convenient, I will indicate the spellings proposed by others.

<sup>2</sup>For interchangeable uses of the term "anomie" with alienation and meaninglessness, see Marshall B. Clinard, "The Theoretical Implications of Anomie and Deviant Behaviour," Anomie and Deviant Behaviour, ed. M. B. Clinard (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), p. 37; for normlessness, see Melvin Seeman, "On the Meaning of Alienation," American Sociological Review, 24 (1959), pp. 787-788; for social disinterest, see H. L. Ansbacher, "Anomie, The Sociologists' Conception of Social Interest," Journal of Individual Psychology, 15 (1959), pp. 212-214; for a discussion of Fromm's concept of "moral aloneness" as anomie, see R. H. Brookes, "The Anatomy of Anomie - Part I," Political Science, 3 (1951), pp. 44-51; for social de-regulation, see M. B. Clinard, "The Theoretical Implications of Anomie and Deviant Behaviour," op. cit., p. 5; for separation-anxiety and powerlessness, see Sebastian de Grazia, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>See Leo Srole, "Social Integration and Certain Corollaries: An Exploratory Study," American Sociological Review, 30 (1956), pp. 709-716; see also Herbert McClosky and John Schaar, "Psychological Dimensions of Anomy," American Sociological Review, 30 (1965), pp. 14-40.

<sup>4</sup>See Bernard Lander, Towards an Understanding of Juvenile Delinquency (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954).

<sup>5</sup>For a brief review of current approaches to the conceptualization of empirical phenomena, see especially Abraham Kaplan, The Conduct of Inquiry (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1964).

<sup>6</sup>See Kenneth McCorquodale and Paul Meehl, "Hypothetical Constructs and Intervening Variables," Psychological Review, 55 (1948), pp. 95-107.



<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>11</sup>For a discussion of this implication, see William P. Alston, Philosophy of Language (Englewood, N.J.: Prentice Hall Inc., 1964), ch. 1.

<sup>12</sup>Durkheim introduced the term briefly in The Division of Labour in Society, in 1893, to denote an aberrant form of "organic solidarity" in a society. His later treatment, however, in Suicide was considerably more extensive and is the source for this interpretation of the concept. See Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labour in Society trans. George Simpson (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1960); and Suicide, trans. George Simpson, J. Spaulding (New York: The Free Press, 1951).

<sup>13</sup>Durkheim, Suicide. p. 38.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 256.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>See de Grazia, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup>See for example Durkheim, Suicide; and R. K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957).

<sup>20</sup>See, for example, Srole, op. cit.; or McClosky and Schaar, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup>The literature used in this frame of reference is drawn from a number of sources. In particular, I have adapted several basic concepts from Erik Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1968); Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society, 2nd ed. (1938: rpt. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1958);



Kurt Reizler, "The Social Psychology of Fear," Identity and Anxiety, ed. Maurice Stein et al (New York: The Free Press, 1960); Rollo May, The Meaning of Anxiety (New York: Ronald Press, 1950).

<sup>22</sup>See May, op. cit.



## CHAPTER II

### Anomie in the Literature

In the previous introductory chapter, it was suggested (i) that the concept of anomie in social science has been used in a variety of ways to reference unobserved conditions of individuals or societies; (ii) that these unobserved conditions have been associated theoretically with a common set of observed behaviour patterns; and (iii) that there appears to exist across diverse conceptions of the anomic condition, a basic commonality in meaning which centers implicitly about the existence of a motivational element linking aspects of the societal norm structure to individual feelings of well-being. The undertaking in this paper has been stated to involve a synthesis of existing contributions to a theory of anomie, and a reconceptualization of the concept along lines that will reflect this commonality of meaning. While Chapters III, IV, and V will be concerned with these major tasks, in the immediate chapter the prior question of what must be synthesized will be considered. That is, what meanings have theorists in the past associated with the term "anomie"? What is it that these theorists are trying to explain and how do their respective conceptions of anomie contribute to their respective explanations?

For comparative purposes, a rudimentary classification of this literature may prove useful. It is evident that two major approaches to the subject have been adopted. The first is the sociological tradition of Durkheim and Robert Merton which treats anomie as a potential property of social systems.<sup>1</sup> A second tradition, emerging



in post-war years, has located the concept in a psychological frame of reference identifying anomie with the characteristics of individuals. Within this latter group of writings, I believe, two more or less distinct types of theorizing deserve separate consideration. The first is primarily the task of describing the hypothetical condition and of establishing its social significance.<sup>2</sup> Often such "descriptive" works attempt merely to define the social problem that subsequent researchers endeavour to solve or explain. As a result, there are continual references by later researchers to these "descriptive analyses" to establish the face validity of empirical measuring instruments. For greater clarity, I will refer to these "descriptive" analyses as the "affective" theories of anomie in recognition of their primary concern with the emotional state of the individual.

The second group of theorists is comprised of empirical researchers. In their attempts to bring rigorously gathered empirical evidence to bear upon purported explications of anomie phenomena, they are forced to define and refine the conceptual frames within which those explications are found. Second-order theorizing of this type, however, does not necessarily attribute the same meaning to the anomie term as suggested by "affective" theories. For this reason, independent consideration will be given to the more rigorous anomie conceptualizations: most notably, to the efforts of Leo Srole and of John Schaar and Herbert McClosky.<sup>3</sup>

Applying this rudimentary classification, then, it is both convenient and appropriate to consider first the theory of Emile Durkheim, whose thinking on the subject of anomie has been perhaps the



greatest single influence on the usages to which that term has been put.

The writings of Durkheim on this topic were introduced briefly in the previous chapter, but they were not subjected to detailed scrutiny at that time. Part of the problem of doing so here stems from the vagueness of the conceptual structure which emerges from those writings. As critics have pointed out, Durkheim's usage of the term *anomie* was not systematic across studies, nor was there any attempt to relate those usages.<sup>4</sup> This ambiguity has in part remained a problem throughout the years as different theorists have seized upon one or the other of Durkheim's usages in applying the term to diverse phenomena relevant to different interests. In an attempt to clear away some of the confusion created in these original treatises on the subject, attention in this analysis will be given to those overall problems and objectives about which Durkheim seemed most concerned in his writings.

Certainly a pervasive theme in this regard involved the problem of social order. In his first major work, The Division of Labour in Society (1893),<sup>5</sup> Durkheim applied his skills to an analysis of societal cohesion or integration. Distinguishing, in an ideal sense, the "mechanical solidarity" of primitive societies from the "organic solidarity" of industrialized nations, he concentrated on problems besetting the latter as growing specialization in the division of labour weakened the individual's sense of "oneness" with his co-workers and, consequently, weakened his commitment to norms governing interpersonal relationships. In this analysis, *anomie* represented the



most prolific abnormal form of the division of labour, denoting a societal condition of de-regulation which others have characterized as normlessness.<sup>6</sup> It would seem, however, that the concept played only a minor role in this initial academic endeavour.

The publication of Suicide four years later reflected Durkheim's renewed and somewhat intensified interest in the problem of anomie as he focussed on the problems of contemporary society.<sup>7</sup> In this treatise, attention was directed ostensibly toward the social causes of suicide, of which anomie was considered to be one.<sup>8</sup> Noting cyclic variations of suicide in different proportions across nations, Durkheim sought to establish their statistical correlation with objective aspects of different social structures among these nations. In this way, he sought to demonstrate the utility and necessity of studying forms of "collective reality" as determinants of individual social action. "Suicide as it exists today is precisely one of the forms through which collective affection from which we suffer is transmitted. Thus it will aid us to understand this."<sup>9</sup>

The conceptualization of anomie in this context retains the interpretation as a "breakdown in regulatory mechanisms"<sup>10</sup> evident in the earlier work, but emphasizes the function such mechanisms perform, and individual reactions resulting from their absence.

Concerning the mechanisms themselves, Durkheim notes that:

. . . At every moment in history, there is a dim perception in the moral consciousness of societies, of the respective value of different social services, the relative reward due to each, and the consequent degree of comfort appropriate on the average to workers in each occupation. The different functions are graded by public opinion and a certain coefficient of well-being assigned to each  
 . . .



Under this pressure, each in his sphere vaguely realizes the extreme limit set to his ambitions and aspires to nothing beyond . . . This relative limitation and the moderation it involves, makes men contented with their lot while stimulating them moderately to improve it. . .<sup>11</sup>

Such forces, he asserted, operate in conjunction with a temporal authority to restrain man's limitless passions. When the pressure of these social constraints toward moderation and limitation is suddenly removed, individuals cannot adjust quickly to the need for self-control, and anomie is said to exist.

Anomie is not a state of normlessness as the term "norm" is ordinarily used for norms may still exist and may in fact be very strongly felt as such. In this context, anomie refers to the absence of those specific norms which function to restrict aspirations. The moral purpose of society is seen to be that of asserting such regulatory norms.<sup>12</sup> The consequences of anomie involve the development of feelings of meaninglessness at the individual level.

. . . All man's pleasure in acting, moving and exerting himself implies the sense that his efforts are not in vain and that by walking he has advanced. However, one does not advance when one walks toward no goal, or - which is the same thing - when his goal is infinity. Since the distance between us and it is always the same, whatever road we take, we might as well have made the motions without progress from the spot. . . To pursue a goal which is by definition unattainable is to condemn oneself to a state of perpetual unhappiness.<sup>13</sup>

If Durkheim's conception of anomie leaves some room for clarification, there is little question about the purpose to which it was put. Durkheim's politics, as John Horton concisely documents,<sup>14</sup> are evident throughout his writing and center about a radical criticism of



contemporary society. "Anomie," writes Horton,

is basically a utopian concept of the political right; it criticizes traditional economic liberalism of the middle classes from a philosophical position which could be called naturalistic transcendentalism. It carries radical rightist implications as it derives from the philosophical positivism of Comte who founded his critique of the social organization of the rising middle classes on an analysis of the form of social control in the ancien regime.<sup>15</sup>

A prior question, however, would concern the function that this "transcendentalist" orientation served in Durkheim's scheme of basic values. While the role of social control may well be defended for its function in protecting property, Durkheim is quite obviously not concerned with this justification. Rather, his writings reflect a humanist's preoccupation with the happiness of societal members. He espouses a distinctly Hobbsian conception of "natural man." Comparing the needs of man with those of animals, for example, he determines that those of the latter are "established with automatic spontaneity because the animal depends on purely material conditions."

This is not the case with man, because most of his needs are not dependent on his body or not to the same degree. . . . Beyond the indispensable minimum which satisfies nature when instinctive, a more awakened reflection suggests better conditions, seemingly desirable ends craving fulfillment. Such appetites, however, admittedly sooner or later reach a limit which they cannot pass. But how determine the quality of well-being. . . . Nothing appears in man's organic nor in his psychological constitution which sets a limit to such tendencies. . . . It is not human nature which can assign the variable limits necessary to our needs. They are thus unlimited so far as they depend on the individual alone.<sup>16</sup>

Durkheim's arguments rest ultimately upon one axiomatic proposition. "No living being can be happy or even exist unless his needs are



sufficiently proportioned to his means."<sup>17</sup> No more basic justification is given for his ethical and political directives regarding social organization. One must only assume, therefore, that anomie implies subjectively an individual sense of unhappiness, or, at the aggregate level, "collective sadness."<sup>18</sup> It is to this empirical state of "morbidity" that he addresses his sociological skills. Above all, Durkheim seems concerned with the psychological experience of pain, suffering, disillusionment and torture. Such experiences, moreover, are not accompanied by the individual's clear perception of their causes. As Durkheim points out, "we believe fruitful this idea that social life should be explained not by the conception which the participants have of it, but by the fundamental causes which escape their consciousness. . . ."<sup>19</sup>

To summarize this conception of anomie, it would appear that the author is concerned with a particular property of the social system which has an adverse affect upon the individual's feeling of well-being. The contention here is that such feelings occupied a central position among those factors motivating Durkheim to examine the societal structure. His concept of anomie, as a lack of moral constraints in society, gains its proper meaning and significance only within the framework of his ideas concerning individual needs and feelings of well-being.

While Durkheim can be credited with introducing the term to sociology, the task of integrating the concept with established sociological theory seems to have fallen initially and primarily to Robert K. Merton. Although Merton's contributions have been chiefly



theoretical in nature, it is important to examine the empirical phenomena to which they apply.<sup>20</sup> In basic approach, and even largely in substance, Merton's theory of anomie drew heavily upon Durkheim's writings some forty years earlier. Like Durkheim, he chose a sociological orientation for the term: "The first thing to note about the sociological concept of anomie is that it is - sociological. Anomie refers to a property of a social system, not to the state of mind of this or that individual within the system."<sup>21</sup> Merton also retained an interest in examining the relationships between the structure of society and the social life of its members. Both Durkheim and Merton assert that the concept of anomie illuminates some aspects of these relationships, and Merton takes the term as properly referring "to a breakdown of social standards governing behaviour."<sup>22</sup>

Beneath this similarity of approach, however, lies substantial differences about the reasons and directions for research. Merton dismisses Durkheim's conception of "natural man" as "more like a caricature than a portrait."<sup>23</sup> His own concern about the social structure is not with how it functions to constrain individual passions, but with how it relates to non-conforming behaviour. He notes that "sociological perspectives have increasingly entered into the analysis of behaviour deviating from prescribed patterns of conduct."<sup>24</sup> It is primarily within this kind of context that Merton conceptually locates the state of anomie.

In what has now become a classic framework for examining society, Merton analytically distinguished two elements of the macro-structure. He perceived the "cultural structure" as "the culturally defined goals,



purposes and interests, held out as legitimate objectives for all or for diversely located members of the society."<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, he characterized the social structure as "that organized set of social relationships in which members of the society are variously implicated."<sup>26</sup> Therefore, as a societal member, the individual inherits both an aspirational framework comprised of values and a set of institutionalized norms of behaviour which regulates his pursuit of those values. Although the two structures are intimately related, they are not necessarily congruent for all sectors of society. "When the cultural and the social structure are malintegrated, the first calling for behaviour and attitudes which the second precludes, there is a strain toward a breakdown of the norms, toward normlessness."<sup>27</sup> Such is the condition of anomie.

But what is anomie at the empirical level? As Merton points out, it is not merely a situation of disjunction between norms and values. Such a situation creates a "strain towards" anomie and is, perhaps, neither a necessary precondition nor the only one.<sup>28</sup> Rather anomie is a state of "cultural chaos" (to use Merton's synonym), "a situation in which calculations of personal advantage and fear of punishment are the only regulating agencies."<sup>29</sup>

Merton is implicitly referring here to a social environment within which individual action takes place. It is the nature of these actions which stimulates his interest in this environment. He notes, for example, that "our primary aim is to discover how some social structures exert a definite pressure upon certain persons in the society to engage in nonconforming conduct."<sup>30</sup> Having stated this aim and having



outlined the particular social situation discussed above, he proceeds to describe the various behavioural adaptations which may result. Thus the individual may react by engaging in innovative and deviant behaviour, regardless of norms to achieve socially valued objectives; he may abandon the pursuit of those objectives, preferring to ritualize his actions in conformity with institutionalized norms; he may virtually withdraw from social interaction; or, finally, he may reject both the norms and values of his society and rebel in favour of a different societal organization.<sup>31</sup>

Looking specifically at the second of these, ritualism, it is sometimes difficult to decipher in what sense Merton is using the term "norm." The possibility of ritualistic behaviour would imply that the society is not in fact normless. Rather, he appears in later writings to agree with Gordon Rose who distinguishes between "lack of norms" and "loss of norm legitimacy" and offers the latter of these as the anomie state.<sup>32</sup> Legitimacy in this context implies that a standard of conduct is deemed acceptable in pursuit of socially valued goals. This is an ethical judgement. In another context, however, Merton refers to norms as role expectations which, when uncertain, create insecurity among members of the population.<sup>33</sup> Although the term may be used in both ways, the meanings are different and would have to be carefully explicated before operationalized measures are constructed.

Regardless of these terminological controversies, Merton's primary objective of linking aberrant behaviour to aspects of the social structure remains unconvincing until the linking element is articulated. The "definite pressure" which Merton mentions in his



statement of aims is the psychological response of the individual to the situation which confronts him. Although individual perspectives of life obviously may differ, as the choice of adaptations would indicate, the feeling of frustration and despair would appear common to all. As demonstrated below, Merton would seem to hold that these feelings stimulate the individual to seek relief in some form of "avoidance behaviour."<sup>34</sup>

Referring, for example, to the strength of open-class and unlimited opportunity doctrines in contemporary American society, Merton alludes to this psychological link in the deviation hypothesis.

This [unlimited opportunity doctrine] leads naturally to the subsidiary theme that success or failure are results wholly to personal qualities; that he who fails has only himself to blame. . . . Whatever the objective truth or falsity of the doctrine in any particular instance . . . the prevailing definition exacts a psychic toll of those who do not measure up. It is in this cultural setting that . . . the threat of defeat motivates men to the use of those tactics, beyond the law or the mores, which promise "success."<sup>35</sup>

Elsewhere, he links the accentuated socio-cultural disjunction of the city to other forms of anomic adaptation, again through emotive reaction.

One of the strengths of the city, its towering structure of opportunity, also makes for its socio-psychological weakness: it excites great expectations, not easily relinquished, and so condemns many to that kind of bitter disappointment that leads to despairing retreat or aberrant ritualism or, on occasion to open rebellion.<sup>36</sup>

In Merton's conception of anomie, these psychological conditions are tensions generated by the external social environment. In



recognizing their presence at all, however, Merton is revising or appending his original statement of anomie theory. Anomie is no longer strictly a sociological concept in its context of meaning. Merton's coinage of the term "anomia," to designate that psychological condition associated with the societal state is, perhaps, some testimony to the necessity for an intervening variable at the individual level for the adequate specification of anomie's role in the deviation hypothesis. Anomie, it seems, is a requisite psychological condition for the adoption of an anomic adaptation. It is the anomia which allows Merton to call a particular behaviour pattern, an anomic adaptation. Deviance per se is insufficient. Because a discussion of the relationship between Merton's conceptions of anomie and anomia will be pursued in the following chapter,<sup>37</sup> the matter will not be discussed in this context. It suffices to say that Merton has maintained the separability of these two concepts: anomie refers to a condition of the social system wherein the normative structure is no longer accepted by societal members as a legitimate guide to goal-oriented social action; while anomie refers to a malady of the individual associated with the unsatisfactory state of the normative structure, and involving a negative emotive or affective reaction to that state.

Merton's introduction of the term "anomia" to designate the psychological condition associated with anomie appeared well after the initial publication of his thesis, and possibly, in response to developments in other areas of social science. Social psychologists since the World War II period have taken an active interest in anomic-related phenomena and have pursued this interest at the individual



level of analysis. Concurrent with - and perhaps causally related to - this methodological shift in emphasis has been a renewed interest in Durkheim's concern for the quality of human existence. Whereas Merton applied his theory to the occurrence of deviance within an otherwise or previously organized society, Durkheim and recent theorists tend to display a primary concern with the relationship of individual anomie to the normative values of psychological and social freedom. Just as Durkheim perceived a relationship between anomie and the individual's freedom from moral constraints, Christian Bay in 1958 expressed as one of his objectives, "to inquire empirically into this problem: how much can the level of empirical freedom be enhanced in modern societies without seriously increasing the amount of anomic suffering?"<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Sebastian de Grazia noted that anomie, as he understands the condition,

. . . can adversely affect the individual's chances for the growth of his potentialities, his use of the freedom offered by a democracy in that sphere which the French call la vie privee.  
 . . . If anomie can be stopped before reaching the acute stage and if the political community can be firmly established, then the real problem can be faced - to make of life a work of art.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, as several theorists have noted in comparing these latter day interests with those of Durkheim, that elder statesman of sociology might well have conferred more legitimacy upon the potential of a psychological explanation with respect to anomie had the discipline of psychology been at a less primitive stage of development when he wrote.<sup>40</sup> In any case, the tendency in recent years has most decidedly been towards a micro-conception of the anomic condition. As one product of this approach, greater emphasis has been placed upon the



subjective experience of anomie and the individual's perspective vis-a-vis his social surroundings.

Perhaps the most comprehensive attempt to examine and discuss such phenomena is found in the works of Erich Fromm - a theorist who never once mentions the term "anomie" but one whose interests seem very much in concert with the concerns of Durkheim and of the other writers quoted above. Consider, for example, this excerpt from his foreward to Escape From Freedom:

It is the thesis of this book that modern man, freed from the bonds of pre-individualistic society, which simultaneously gave him security and limited him, has not gained freedom in the positive sense of the realization of his individual self; that is, the expression of his intellectual, emotional and sensuous potentialities. Freedom, though it has brought him independence and rationality, has made him isolated and, thereby, anxious and powerless. This isolation is unbearable and the alternative he is confronted with are either to escape from the burden of his freedom into new dependencies and submission, or to advance to the full realization of positive freedom which is based upon the uniqueness and individuality of man.<sup>41</sup>

Fromm, like Durkheim, Bay and de Grazia, is concerned with the consequences of freeing the individual from social constraints. His conception of those consequences bear a remarkable resemblance to the plight of these normless individuals driven to anomic and egoistic suicide in Durkheim's day.

To feel completely alone and isolated leads to mental disintegration just as physical starvation leads to death. This relatedness to others is not identical with physical contact. An individual may be alone in a physical sense for many years and yet he may be related to ideas, values, or at least social patterns that give him a feeling of communion and "belonging." On the other hand he may live among people and yet be overcome with an utter feeling of isolation. . . . This lack of relatedness to values, symbols, patterns, we



may call moral aloneness and state that physical aloneness becomes unbearable only if it implies also moral aloneness.<sup>42</sup>

Certainly the feelings of "moral aloneness" that afflict Fromm's subjects are not precisely the same as the feelings of meaninglessness that Durkheim noted among members of his anomic society. In important respects, however, Fromm's phenomena do conform to a general pattern of experience which has traditionally characterized the usage of anomie at the individual level. Thus the individual experiences a discomfort which may become unbearable; this discomfort is vaguely associated with his perceptions and feelings about the quality of his relatedness to the social surroundings; and he may engage in some form of "avoidance behaviour" specifically designed to alleviate the discomfort. Viewed from this perspective, Fromm's concept of "moral aloneness" loses some of its uniqueness. It is argued in the next chapter that the patterns noted above, and more importantly, the so far unspecified relationships among them, reflect a significant element of commonality in the various meanings attached to the anomie term and to related terms by maladjustment theorists.

If Fromm's notions of "moral aloneness" represent a subtle or nonobvious extension of Durkheim's original thesis, Sebastian de Grazia, a writer contemporary of Fromm, makes no attempt to shroud his efforts toward the same end. In The Political Community,<sup>43</sup> de Grazia attempted to update Durkheim's theory of anomie in light of recent advances in psychology. Endeavouring to adopt the same approach that Durkheim had used for this purpose, he noted that "anomie, as Durkheim conceived it in the subjective sense had three characteristics: a



painful uneasiness or anxiety, a feeling of separation from the group or of isolation from group standards, a feeling of pointlessness or that no certain goals exist."<sup>44</sup> To explain why man suffers from this condition, why he needs norms and beliefs, and why the thwarting of these needs results "uniformly in anxiety", became de Grazia's objective in this study.

His explanation revolves about the concept of "anxiety," or more precisely, "separation-anxiety," and employs a developmental model. In essence, de Grazia posits the occurrence of anxiety as an inevitable and universal childhood experience arising when biological and psychological needs are not immediately gratified.<sup>45</sup> Separation-anxiety is a painful sense of uneasiness in the child occasioned by the absence, inattention, or withdrawal of protection on the part of his attendants, with whom he associates need gratification. To minimize such occurrences, the child develops a "belief system" which defines the attitudinal and behavioural standards he has found most conducive for maintaining the attendant's protection. Several crises occur in the child's development as successively more generalized or pervasive "rulers" prove incapable of controlling new and threatening experiences. The recurrence in each crisis of "separation-anxiety" leads the young person to seek relief in a new "belief-system" which defines the requisites of compliance for a more powerful "ruler." As the child's world is differentiated into several roles, he adopts corresponding sets of beliefs to govern and assure his protection in those different aspects of his life.

Within this developmental frame of reference, the term "simple



anomie" refers to the individual's apprehension of "separation-anxiety" when it becomes apparent to him that the "directives" of two or more of his "belief-systems" demand of him conflicting attitudes or behaviour.<sup>46</sup> An obvious example of such a situation might concern the directive of "brotherly love" and "co-operation" evident in most occidental religions. Because this directive is supposedly universal in its sphere of applicability, it might easily conflict with the directive of "competition" common to the economic belief-system with its stress on impersonal business practises and the infallible wisdom of "market forces." The individual who is reliant upon both belief-systems for the regulation of his environment is placed in the position of choosing between these directives in deciding upon a course of action. In de Grazia's framework, compliance with one directive would involve disobedience of the other, creating a fear that the disobeyed "ruler" might withdraw his protection from the individual. The "rulers" in this case might be an omnipotent God and, for example, the "invisible hand." In the subjective sense, de Grazia describes simple anomie as

. . . the uncertainty that afflicts the individual in those moods of doubt following an act of his that violates a directive or an act of another that hits home. Such action, given or perceived, brings not mere expectation, but apprehension, of anxiety. The person fears an indefinite but impending danger situation. Upon being asked, he cannot say, in the words of the spiritual, "sometimes I feel like a motherless child" and that it is the old dread of helplessness which he fearfully anticipates. . . .<sup>47</sup>

If "simple anomie" is the apprehension of anxiety, "acute anomie" in de Grazia's scheme refers to an actual attack of anxiety in which the individual "can truly be called directionless, rudderless, ruleless."<sup>48</sup> It would appear to involve a disintegration of the



individual's commitment to norms and values rather than merely his troubled doubts about them. This more extreme form of psychological condition would correspond to the worst reactions of other previously cited theorists.

While de Grazia develops his thesis at both the societal and individual levels, the former application would seem to reduce effectively to aggregate or community occurrences of the latter. Contrary to the interpretations of some commentators,<sup>49</sup> simple and acute anomie would not appear to correspond to societal and individual conditions respectively. As de Grazia uses his terms, the two conditions could occur side by side in two members of the same society, or, either may reference societal conditions.

Although Robert MacIver does not advance a comprehensive "theory" of anomie in the tradition of those writers discussed above, his description of the condition and use of the term would seem to have had an impact upon later theorists in their more rigorous attempts to conceptualize the problem. For this reason, his treatment of the condition deserves mention. Anomie, according to MacIver,

. . . signifies the state of mind of one who has been pulled up from his moral roots, who no longer has any standards but only disconnected urges, who no longer has any sense of continuity, of folk, or obligation. The anomic man has become spiritually sterile, responsive only to himself, responsible to no one. . . . He lives on the thin line of sensation between no future and no past.<sup>50</sup>

Accompanying this description, MacIver suggests a classification of three anomic types. It would appear, however, that only one of them corresponds to the actual condition of anomie while the other two



are avoidance reactions. Thus his third type "is characterized above all by a fundamental and tragic insecurity. . . . It is the insecurity of the hopelessly disoriented."<sup>51</sup> The other types refer (a) to the individual who abandons all purposive behaviour beyond that which gives immediate gratification, and (b) to the individual who devotes himself without social conscience to the acquisition of extrinsic objectives.<sup>52</sup>

In the comprehensive social sense characterizing the usages above, only one other significant application of the term has been attempted, and this work has conveyed, perhaps, the widest empirical scope of all to the concept. David Riesman, Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney, in The Lonely Crowd<sup>53</sup> have employed the term in a relational context of individual character with societal structure.

My use of anomic. . . . covers a wider range than Durkheim's metaphor: it is virtually synonymous with maladjusted, a term I refrain from using because of its negative connotations. . . . In determining adjustment, the test is not whether an individual's overt behaviour obeys social norms but whether his character structure does.<sup>54</sup>

An individual would be predominantly anomic, according to Riesman, if his character required and sought satisfactions through socially defined values and norms when the existing societal structure was not geared to provide them. If his character was such that he could transcend his socio-cultural milieu in order to gain satisfaction, he would correspond to Riesman's "autonomous" type. Finally, if his character precluded this extra-societal dimension, but could find satisfactions within the societal structure, he would be an "adjusted" type.<sup>55</sup>

The empirical condition to which anomie refers in this case is not clearly spelled out. However, it would appear that the "anomic"



type would suffer continual frustration in the demands he placed upon society. If he conformed to social norms, he would be engaging in what Merton calls "ritualism." If he did not conform, he would be subject to social sanctions which he feared. The other Mertonian adaptations would, of course, be open to him, but they would also involve or reflect a measure of frustration. This individual condition would seem, therefore, to involve a disjunction between personal values and societal norms or vice versa where the individual has an emotional commitment to both. Riesman alludes to the resultant frustrations as a "character neurosis."<sup>56</sup> He notes that ". . . it is usually not too difficult to explain why someone is anomic, since the tragedies and warpings of life, like germs, are omnipresent, and any personal disaster can be traced back to its 'cause.'"<sup>57</sup>

As noted in the introduction of this chapter, anomie theorists with an individual level orientation have tended to adopt either of two general approaches for their studies of the anomic condition. To this point in the survey, I have concentrated on the so-called "affective" approach in evidence through the treatments of Erich Fromm, Sebastian de Grazia, Robert MacIver, and David Riesman. It can be seen that these theorists have demonstrated a primary concern with the affective aspects of the condition as might be reflected in the self-reports of anomic individuals. That is, they have placed emphasis upon the emotional reactions or feelings which appear to accompany certain perceptions about one's social environment. Moreover, there is implicit in the analyses of Fromm and de Grazia especially a linking of these feelings to certain behaviours considered anti-social and perhaps



dangerous within their particular frameworks of normative values. Perceived in this light, it would seem that anomie has taken on a greater social significance than is ordinarily accorded abnormal psychological conditions. Perhaps prodded by the significance of the problem, a second generation of anomie theorists has attempted to develop valid and reliable objective criteria for identifying the condition. Given the difficulty of finding operational indices for the affective states described above, these theorists have seized upon the cognitive aspects of anomie. They have placed emphasis in their conceptual schemes upon those social beliefs of the individual which appear integral to the subjective experience.

Perhaps the basic conceptual statement of this "cognitive" approach appears in the pioneering effort of Leo Srole.<sup>58</sup> Anomie, according to Srole's conception, implies a generalized attitude of "interpersonal alienation."<sup>59</sup> His choice of an "attitude" frame of reference to conceptualize anomie reflects a disposition on Srole's part to interpret the construct in a way that permits both a retention of the dimensions noted by "affective" theorists, and an intersubjective means of identifying those dimensions. That is, an attitude framework incorporates the affective orientation, but places emphasis upon the cognitive stimuli with which the affect is associated. Srole has attempted therefore to abstract the common cognitive dimension implicit in Durkheim's notion of the individual's anomic reaction, in MacIver's sense of social detachment, and in Lasswell's state of psychic isolation.<sup>60</sup> For Srole, these conditions would seem to imply the individual's perception of unsatisfactory relationships with his social



environment. Theoretically, the author sets out this idea in terms of a "eunomia-anomia" continuous dimension ". . . referring to the individual's generalized pervasive sense of 'self-to-others belongingness' at one extreme compared with 'self-to-others distance' and 'self-to-others alienation' at the other pole. . . ." This theoretical formulation, he notes, might best be reflected at the operational level by

. . . the respondent's definition or perception of his own interpersonal situation. To this end we set down the ideational states or components that on theoretical grounds would represent internalized counterparts or reflections, in the individual's life situation, of conditions of social dysfunction. . . .<sup>62</sup>

The subjective experience accompanying Merton's notion of societal "social dysfunction" is reflected, therefore, in the individual's beliefs about the nature of his social bonds. Does the individual perceive an "interdependent bond within the social system between leaders and those they should represent and serve?"<sup>63</sup> Does he foresee a coherent future for himself? Does he see the lot of the average man getting better or worse? Is the individual optimistic about the future? How does he perceive the quality of his friendships?<sup>64</sup>

Although Srole cautions his readers to treat this proposal as a preliminary conceptualization and instrument for the study of social integration,<sup>65</sup> very little has been done subsequently to elaborate the conceptual framework suggested here or to refine further the empirical instrument involved. In fact, prior to 1965, virtually no major theoretical modifications were proposed despite the plethora of empirical applications employing the Srole model. In 1965, however, Herbert McClosky and John Schaar published a critique of the Srole model and a



counter-proposal.<sup>66</sup>

According to these authors, anomie should be conceptualized as

. . . a state of mind, a cluster of attitudes, beliefs feelings in the minds of individuals. Specifically, it is the feeling that the world and oneself are adrift, wandering, lacking in clear rules and stable moorings. The anomic feels literally de-moralized; for him, the norms governing behaviour are weak, ambiguous and remote. He lives in a normative "low pressure" area, a turbulent region of weak and fitful currents of moral meaning. The core of the concept is the feeling of moral emptiness.<sup>67</sup>

Many of the themes encountered in previous writings are present in this conception. Their debt to the writings of R. M. MacIver,<sup>68</sup> whose emphasis on "moral uprootedness" is reflected in their notion of "de-moralization" or "moral emptiness." is especially obvious. It is also evident in both conceptions that these perceptions and feelings are not merely one aspect of the individual's system of orientation; instead, they are an integral part of his perspective on life, and concern us because they offend our conception of a "healthy" personality. Throughout their paper, the authors emphasize how centrally anomie figures in the notion of well-being; for example,

. . . Those whose intellectual or cognitive equipment lacks power and efficiency find it difficult to organize and understand the events and ideas they encounter, and this difficulty apparently produces, not security and confidence, but bewilderment and anxiety. Those who cannot think clearly or relate events to each other or organize their observations and experiences into meaningful structures are most prone to be confused about their society's values and to see the society itself as lacking in order and meaning.<sup>69</sup>

Like Srole, McClosky and Schaar have adopted a "cognitive" approach to the conceptualization of anomie utilizing the concept of



attitude. Even more than Srole, however, they have tended to stress the perceptual element which is linked to feelings of well-being. That is, while Srole was concerned with the individual's perceived social integration or relationship with others, these authors have conceptualized the cognitive element at one remove from these relationships: viz., the individual's perception of norms governing relationships in society. In their version of the anomie scale, they note that

The items express the feeling that people today lack firm convictions and standards, that it is difficult to tell right from wrong in our complex and disorderly world, that the traditional values which gave meaning to the society have lost their force, and that social ties which bond men together have dissolved.<sup>70</sup>

Elsewhere, they state that "the people we designate as anomic are those who say precisely the sorts of things that these items express."<sup>71</sup> Their emphasis upon the cognitive and evaluative element of anomie for the perception of norms is the basis of their critique of the Srole model. Although more attention will be given the causal models involved in both conceptions, suffice it to state at this point that Srole has adopted Merton's theory of "anomia" whereby individuals react to the structural-cultural maladjustment of their social milieu. McClosky and Schaar, on the other hand, have suggested that social-cultural disjunction by itself is insufficient for accounting for the incidence of anomie. Conceptualized as the perception of a normless society, anomie may also be a function of other psychological factors and personality traits that may impair one's cognitive functioning or one's ability to perceive norms.

In this chapter, I have attempted to explore the various meanings



that theorists have attached to the term "anomie." It should be evident from this survey of the literature that differences in usage correspond to different levels of analysis and to different emphases placed upon conceptual components of the construct. It should also be evident that these different usages do not yield identical meanings, if meaning is partly derived from the nomological relationships associated with the construct. In the following chapter, these various conceptions will be re-examined to ascertain the possibility of deriving a common meaning for the term based on core assumptions about the nature of the condition to which all would seem to subscribe.



## Footnotes, Chapter II

<sup>1</sup>See Emile Durkheim, Suicide trans. George Simpson, John Spaulding (New York: The Free Press, 1947); and R. K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957).

<sup>2</sup>In this thesis, I will term the works of Erich Fromm, Sebastian de Grazia, David Riesman, Robert MacIver "affective theories" of anomie. For reference to their primary work in this area, see Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom, (1941; rpt. New York: Avon Books, 1965); Sebastian de Grazia, The Political Community: A Study of Anomie (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948); David Riesman et al, The Lonely Crowd (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950); Robert MacIver, The Ramparts We Guard (New York: MacMillan Co., 1957).

<sup>3</sup>See Leo Srole, "Social Integration and Certain Corollaries," American Sociological Review, 21 (1956), pp. 709-716; see also Herbert McClosky and John Schaar, "Psychological Dimensions of Anomie," American Sociological Review, 30 (1965), pp. 14-40.

<sup>4</sup>Gordon Rose, for example, identifies two versions of anomie in Durkheim's The Division of Labour in Society and Suicide, which he claims are not quite the same. See Gordon Rose, "Anomie and Deviation: A Conceptual Framework for Empirical Studies," The British Journal of Sociology, 17 (1966), pp. 29-45.

<sup>5</sup>Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labour in Society trans. George Simpson, (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1960).

<sup>6</sup>Rose, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>7</sup>Durkheim, Suicide.

<sup>8</sup>Durkheim also distinguished egoistic, altruistic and fatalistic kinds of suicide although their meanings have tended to be subsumed by later theorists by the one term, anomie. Thus Leo Srole, in describing his operational measure of anomie, regards "self-to-others alienation" as "the common element in Durkheim's conceptualization of anomie, egoisme, altruisme and fatalisme. . . ." See Srole, op. cit., p. 711.

<sup>9</sup>Durkheim, Suicide, p. 37.

<sup>10</sup>Rose, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>11</sup>Durkheim, Suicide, p. 249-250.



<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 383.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>14</sup>John Horton, "The Dehumanization of Anomie and Alienation: A Problem in the Ideology of Sociology," The British Journal of Sociology, 15 (1964), pp. 283-300.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>16</sup>Durkheim, Suicide, p. 247.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>18</sup>"Collective sadness" is the term that Durkheim uses. See ibid., p. 391.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted by John Horton from a book review by Durkheim. See Horton, op. cit., p. 287.

<sup>20</sup>Merton's theory of anomie has developed over three decades of research from the original publication of his thesis in 1938. The discussion in this paper is based upon his following publications: R. K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957); R. K. Merton, "Anomie, Anomia and Social Interaction: Contexts of Deviant Behaviour," Anomie and Deviant Behaviour, ed. Marshal B. Clinard (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1964), pp. 213-242; R. K. Merton, "Social Problems and Sociological Theory," Contemporary Social Problems, ed. R. K. Merton, R. A. Nisbit (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), pp. 723-728.

<sup>21</sup>Merton, "Anomie, Anomia and Social Interaction," in Clinard, op. cit., p. 226.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Merton. Social Theory and Social Structure, p. 131.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 132.



<sup>26</sup>  
Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>27</sup>  
Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>28</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>  
Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>30</sup>  
Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>31</sup>  
For Merton's most complete discussion of these adaptations, see ibid., pp. 176-192.

<sup>32</sup>  
See Rose, op. cit., p. 31. For Merton's use of the legitimacy notion, see Merton, "Anomie, Anomia and Social Interaction," op. cit., p. 227.

<sup>33</sup>  
Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, p. 159.

<sup>34</sup>  
The term "avoidance behaviour" is adopted from Rose, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

<sup>35</sup>  
Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, p. 159.

<sup>36</sup>  
Merton, "Anomie, Anomia and Social Interaction," op. cit., p. 227.

<sup>37</sup>  
See below, pp. 59-62.

<sup>38</sup>  
Christian Bay, The Structure of Freedom (1958; rpt. New York: Atheneum Press, 1968), p. 81.

<sup>39</sup>  
de Grazia, op. cit., pp. xv-xvi.

<sup>40</sup>  
See ibid., pp. 4-5 and the Introduction by George Simpson in his translation of Suicide.

<sup>41</sup>  
Fromm, op. cit., p. viii.

<sup>42</sup>  
Ibid., p. 34.



<sup>43</sup> de Grazia, op. cit.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>45</sup> See ibid., chapter I for a general description of this state.

<sup>46</sup> See ibid., chapter III for a discussion of the circumstances surrounding "simple anomie."

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Stephen Davol and Gunars Reismanis, "The Role of Anomie as a Psychological Concept," Journal of Individual Psychology, 15 (1959), pp. 215-225.

<sup>50</sup> MacIver, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 85-87.

<sup>53</sup> Riesman, op. cit.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 217-218.

<sup>55</sup> For a discussion of these three types, see ibid., pp. 242-246.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>58</sup> Reference here is to Srole's initial effort published in 1956. See Srole, op. cit. Two subsequent publications do not basically alter the position he has taken here. For these other articles, see Leo Srole, "Anomie, Authoritarianism and Prejudice," American Sociological Review, 22 (1956), pp. 63-67; and Leo Srole, "A Comment on Anomy," American Sociological Review, 30 (1965), pp. 757-762.



59 Srole would appear to use the terms "anomia" and "interpersonal alienation" interchangeably. See Srole, "Social Integration and Certain Corollaries," op. cit., p. 712.

60 Ibid., pp. 711-712.

61 Ibid., p. 711.

62 Ibid., p. 712.

63 Ibid., p. 712.

64 These five questions are attempts to paraphrase Srole's items for his "anomia-eunomia" scale. See ibid., pp. 712-713.

65 Ibid., p. 716.

66 See McClosky and Schaar, op. cit.

67 Ibid., p. 19.

68 MacIver, op. cit., p. 84.

69 McClosky and Schaar, op. cit., p. 21.

70 Ibid., p. 24.

71 Ibid., pp. 23-24.



### Chapter III

#### The Underlying Assumptions of Anomie Usage

The analysis of the preceding chapter attempted to survey the conceptions of anomie presented by theorists over the past eighty years. Two general observations of that survey might be taken to represent the raison d'etre or departure point for this thesis. In the first place, the term "anomie" has not been used in the same way by different theorists. While Durkheim and Merton employed the term to designate a state of society which produced specified consequences at the individual level, other schools of thought have conceptualized anomie variously as a psychic state, a character trait, a character neurosis, and one pole of an attitude continuum. The question might well be asked whether these differences in usage of the term have theoretical consequences which would create difficulties in applying the term to various situations. It will be argued in the following pages that this is in fact the case; that variation in the use of the term is a major source of the conceptual confusion surrounding its application.

A second general observation emerging from the earlier chapter concerns similarities among these same anomic conceptions. While important differences undoubtedly exist, we can observe a conscious attempt by theorists to establish the congruency of their contributions with earlier treatments of the construct. None of these theorists with the possible exception of Durkheim would claim responsibility for having "induced" the existence of this unobservable state. Rather each would seem to be working with a preconceived notion of anomie explicitly



dependent upon precursor treatments of the state. Depending on the purposes of their inquiry and on their theoretical predispositions, these theorists have brought different conceptual frames to bear upon the anomie notion. The fact that these different frames of reference carry implications which, considered together, are not entirely consistent, should not preclude the possibility of finding a more basic meaning that all would hold in common. It is argued in this chapter that a basic "notion" of anomie can be articulated in terms of a higher order paradigm to which all of the anomie theorists would subscribe. Therefore, the claim is defended that a synthesis of anomie theories is possible through use of this higher order paradigm.

The problems involved in specifying meaning have long been a source of controversy among philosophers of science and philosophers of language. Certainly my discussion here cannot do justice to the various points of view expressed by the different schools of thought. However, I believe it is necessary to articulate the assumptions and criteria that underly any particular meaning analysis. I will proceed to do this in the following discussion.

I will subscribe in this paper to the so-called "formalistic" or "network" theory of meaning.<sup>1</sup> That is, I would argue that the meaning of a term designating a theoretical construct derives from its usage in sentences that express the construct's relationships with other observable and unobservable constructs. The meaning of a term, then, is determined by the empirical theory within which it is explicated. It follows that no one statement will suffice to exhaust the meaning of a theoretical term; moreover, to the extent that a theoretical



construct is related to observable constructs, we may refer to these relationships as being partial specifications of the meaning of the construct.<sup>2</sup>

For the purposes of this inquiry, we are concerned with the implications of these assumptions for relating a construct to unspecified, unanticipated or new theoretical and empirical situations. That is, are the general implicit and explicit meaning relationships deriving from the various usages of the term "anomie" consistent when their implications are examined? Ideally, we would hope that anomie theorists differ only to the extent that they are exploring different perspectives of the same hypothetical state, and are thus merely expanding its meaning in a complementary fashion. Some evidence for positing this as at least an intention is found in the omnipresent and largely non-critical reference by theorists to previously published works in the area. It would appear, however, that neither the ideal nor the intention is fully realized.

Perhaps the most glaring difference in conceptual meaning concerns the units to which the hypothetical state is said to apply. Thus Durkheim and Merton discuss anomie as a group or a societal quality with empirical referents typified by aggregate statistics or by rates of occurrence of particular "deviant" behaviours. On the other hand, social psychological approaches postulate that anomie is a psychic state of the individual, having various affective and cognitive referents. Clearly, the theoretical and empirical implications for each approach are not necessarily meaningful when applied to the unit of analysis used by the other. For Merton, it is certainly not



necessary for all members of a society to suffer from anomia to speak correctly of an anomic society.<sup>3</sup> In addition, his conceptions of anomia and anomic adaptations, while linked theoretically to the macro condition, encompass a sufficiently diverse range of individual phenomena to render remote the possibility of applying uniformly the cognitive and affective criteria implied by psychological theorists.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, it would require considerable reification to attribute feelings of "moral aloneness"<sup>5</sup> or "self-to-others alienation"<sup>6</sup> to an abstract aggregate like a society. These terms seemingly would have no place in the meaning of a term referencing a societal condition.

Were this the only problem among theories, one might propose to employ different terminologies when referring to the two states, as Merton suggests. Even among the individual level theories, however, the theoretical implications are not entirely consistent. Thus for "affective" theories, we might define a domain of interest which extends across conditions of emotional discomfort associated with the quality of one's social relationships. "Cognitive" theorists, on the other hand, would appear to define their domain of interest in terms of beliefs about those social relationships. Now clearly these domains will overlap for some individuals; but, from a theoretical standpoint, it is not at all clear that the latter domain implies the former one. That is, an individual might quite conceivably express a cognitive awareness of the social conditions as indicated in the theories by Srole and by McClosky and Schaar,<sup>7</sup> and he might express a personal distaste for them as well; yet he would not necessarily display the sense of desperation and emptiness that characterizes Durkheim's potential



suicide case,<sup>8</sup> or Fromm's "morally alone" person.<sup>9</sup> In theory, such an individual might fit Riesman's character description of the "autonomous" type quite accurately.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the ardent Marxist or religious reformer may hold what are termed "anomic" beliefs by the "cognitive" theorists, but may exhibit none of the very subjective feelings upon which "affective" theorists have seemed to dwell.

To restate the argument, anomie conceptualized as one pole or interval of a theoretical attitude continuum does not imply merely that a different frame of reference is being employed to describe the condition; rather, such an approach extends the meaning of the term beyond the domain of the condition described by most "affective" theorists. One could not argue that the two meanings are the same if the "cognitive" theorists would employ the same explanation to account for conditions which may or may not be considered anomic by "affective" theorists. While the counter-claim may be made that these conditions do exhibit considerable overlap empirically, such a claim abandons the theoretical basis for the condition and leaves undetermined the criteria for applying the term. How in fact would the two approaches differ in their treatments of cases where only one of the two observable criteria are satisfied - cases like the Marxist, the religious reformer or the individual with Riesman's "autonomous" character?

The fact that we can't answer this question is revealing. For anomie theorists would not seem to be concerned with this type of individual or perhaps not with this aspect of the individual. While the theories of Srole and of McClosky and Schaar do not specifically



exclude such cases from their domains of interest, it is relatively clear that those theories were intended to describe and explain with greater precision the notions of anomie presented by others. Simply stated, it would seem that differences or inconsistencies among theoretical meanings of anomie are more unintentional artifacts of the different theoretical frames involved than the conscious intentions of their authors.

Working from this belief, the following discussion will attempt to examine those observable and unobservable states of affairs that theorists would seem to hold in common. It will then be argued that the underlying assumptions which link these states of affairs constitute a paradigm upon which all anomie conceptions are implicitly based.

In reviewing the literature discussed in the last chapter, it is perhaps striking that all of these theorists have associated the condition of anomie with aspects of social order. That is, anomie, whether individual or societal, has implied the absence of order or predictability in social relationships. Thus Merton contends that societal anomie involves a breakdown of the "normative order" such that norms are no longer felt to reflect presently realistic expectations about behaviour, nor to provide criteria for social acceptance or rejection of particular behaviours.

In a word, the degree of anomie in a social system is indicated by the extent to which there is a lack of consensus on norms judged to be legitimate, with its attendant uncertainty and insecurity in social relations. For if norms are not shared, then one cannot know what to expect of the other, and this is a social condition admirably suited for producing insecure relations with others.<sup>11</sup>



For Merton, writing in twentieth century America, the value system or goal structure would seem both universal and institutionalized. Norms of behaviour merely regulate or order social relationships by prescribing socially acceptable avenues to goal-acquisition. However, Emile Durkheim worked in the different social milieu of nineteenth century Europe. Social order for that type of society involved regulatory mechanisms of behaviour and aspirations which varied across different statuses. It was not only the behavioural norms that broke down in a condition of societal anomie, but also the aspirational limitations which previously had allowed men to be content with their sometimes minor achievements. Whether or not norms cease to exist, are deemed unrealistic, or become unshared is immaterial to the major thrust of these arguments. The important point for Durkheim as for Merton centers about the breakdown of that crucial aspect of the "normative structure" which orders social behaviour. For Durkheim, this was the limitation placed upon the aspirations of different statuses. As Merton was not confronted with a differential goal structure, he perceived as crucial the behavioural avenues to goal-achievement. For both of these theorists then, anomie is a condition of social disorder brought about by a breakdown in regulating mechanisms in society.

When interest is shifted from the societal level to that of the individual, one's frame of reference shifts from objective patterns of interaction to subjective beliefs and feelings about the nature of those patterns. It would appear, however, that this shift in perspective from the objective to the subjective does not alter the central



emphasis upon social order. Thus, McClosky and Schaar concern themselves primarily with factors which may impede the learning of norms by individuals in society.

The norms of a society are, of course, learned; so too are the anomic feelings that there are no norms. What is learned is a function of many things: what is actually "out there" to be learned; the nature and quality of the teaching process; the learner's own ability and motivation; the strength and frequency of reinforcement; the amounts and kinds of impediments to learning, and so forth.<sup>12</sup>

According to these authors, norms involve those values and behavioural patterns which impose an order upon social relationships. Through the socialization process most individuals learn what that order is; and, on the basis of these beliefs, they are able to function within their society. Anomic individuals are those who, for some reason, have not learned what normative order to impose on social interaction, and thus they "are most likely to view the society as disorderly and bewildering, and to deplore the incoherence of its value system."<sup>13</sup>

We have seen that Leo Srole's conceptualization of anomie (or anomia) focussed on "interpersonal alienation" or feelings about one's social integration into the mainstream of his culture. However, the role of a "normative order" (a consistent set of values and behavioural norms thought to be held in common by members of a society and from which they derive expectations about themselves and their social relationships) is central to Srole's meaning of the term "integration." Among the "ideational" states that Srole identifies as consistent with anomic beliefs are those associated with this integrating social order: the perceived breakdown of norms governing the public trust and



responsibility of leadership; "the individual's perception of the social order as essentially fickle and unpredictable, i.e., orderless . . . ;"<sup>14</sup> the belief that adherence to norms is causing a retrogression, not a progression to desired goal-states; "the deflation or loss of internalized social norms and values, reflected in extreme form in the individual's sense of the meaninglessness of life itself;"<sup>15</sup> and finally, the perception that the norm governing the social relationship of friendship "was no longer predictive or supportive."<sup>16</sup> From these examples, it should be evident that a prime requisite of social integration for Srole is the individual's perception of a shared social order. Anomie is the feeling of malintegration arising from a breakdown of that perception of social order.

Although Srole's theoretical formulation of anomie as an attitude continuum differs from the "affective" conceptualizations published earlier, it is apparent that he is attempting to refine and operationalize their notions of anomie. Placed in this perspective, these "affective" conceptualizations would seem also to isolate the absence of an expected order in social relationships as a key element of anomie.

Fromm's theory of "moral aloneness" perhaps departs most radically from the sociological model involving a "normative order" with behavioural norms. Yet, in many ways, the implications at the individual level are the same for the two kinds of theories. Thus Fromm deals with a purported developmental sequence whereby the child becomes aware of his own individuality or of his isolation from primary familial ties, and strives to regain a relatedness with his surroundings.



The kind of relatedness to the world may be noble or trivial, but even being related to the basest kind of pattern is immensely preferable to being alone. Religion and nationalism, as well as any custom and any belief however absurd and degrading, if it only connects the individual with others, are refuges from what man most dreads: isolation. . . . Unless he belonged somewhere, unless his life had some meaning and direction, he would feel like a particle of dust. . . . He would not be able to relate himself to any system which would give meaning and direction to his life. . . .<sup>17</sup>

The ideal relatedness to which Fromm later refers is seen to involve a set of values including the recognition of one's individuality, a link with the natural order through "productive work," and a link with others through love.<sup>18</sup> As he points out above, however, this relatedness to a system need not take this ideal form, but may be manifest in any system of ideas which provides a meaning and direction for life - whether that system involves a religion, an ideology, or merely nationalism.

Sebastian de Grazia assumes a somewhat clearer position than Fromm with regard to the nature of the ordering system. For de Grazia, the normative structure consists of several inter-related belief-systems corresponding to the various societal subsystems with which the individual is involved. Each belief-system establishes a normative relationship of the individual to his "ruler" and to others in the same subsystem.

The rulers have their duty, then, of regulating the environment whether for rain, shine, or prosperity. Divinite oblige. But, in return, believers in a political ideology have obligations to the ruler. . . . Obedience to law is undeniably part of the citizen's debt of the ruler.<sup>19</sup>



Clearly, the society's belief-systems bring order and control to the environment by regulating the behaviour of members and by regulating perhaps even the natural elements. As with those theorists discussed previously, anomie is related to the presence or absence of that order and control. Simple anomie is said to result when conflicting directives or norms of different belief-systems preclude the individual's obedience to their respective "rulers" at the same time and thus threaten the order which these leaders provide. Acute anomie is the individual or societal state which results when "rulers" withdraw their protection and order is lost.

It should be apparent from this discussion that anomie theorists vary greatly in their assumptions about the nature of regulatory or ordering mechanisms for the individual and for the society. Equally apparent among these theories is a consistent association of anomie with the malfunction of these mechanisms, however they are defined. While this analysis is important for exposing the nature of some differences in their conceptualizations, it is also important, I believe, for establishing a common underlying assumption for their meanings of the anomie notion. The following discussion will attempt to isolate and identify a second and more or less implicit element in the term's usage which, when linked theoretically to the notion of social order, will provide a common anomie paradigm.

In my opinion this second element is reflected by the consistent reference to subjective feelings of anguish or profound emotional discomfort in discussions of the anomic condition at the individual level. The task of describing an emotional experience is a difficult one, and



not surprisingly, the authors examined here employ a considerable semantic variety in attempting to convey its essence. We have already seen that Durkheim perceived that states of "perpetual unhappiness," of "disillusionment," and of "despair," were consequences of an anomic society;<sup>20</sup> that Merton referred to the "psychic toll," the frustration, and the insecurity which attended his anomic society;<sup>21</sup> that Fromm spoke of the "intolerable" or "unbearable" burden of "moral aloneness;" and that de Grazia cited separation-anxiety as the central element of anomie. MacIver's "tragic insecurity," Riesman's "character neurosis," McClosky and Schaar's "confusion," "bewilderment," and "anxiety," testify as well to the consistency with which this dimension of the experience is noted. A further clue to the intensity of this discomfort is provided by the equally consistent association of anomie with "avoidance behaviour." In fact, as Gordon Rose implies,<sup>22</sup> it would appear that, from Durkheim forward, aberrant and seemingly inexplicable behaviour among individuals has been the primary stimulus behind conceptualizations of the anomie condition. Such behaviours are postulated to result when the anguish of anomie becomes unbearable. Merton has perhaps best summarized the range of possible "avoidance behaviours" in his four anomic adaptations of innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion.

There is no intuitive relationship between feelings of well-being or personal anguish and the actual (or perceived) states of social order and disorder. In examining the literature, however, it is possible to discern several theoretical assumptions which do not fully explicate the relationship between these components, but which do



sketch in a partial frame of reference. More specifically, theorists would seem to assume that at least one aspect of an individual's feeling of well-being derives from his sense of social anchorage. This anchorage in turn would appear to involve a relatively stable orientation to his social surroundings. The normative structure is assumed to perform this orientation role. Anomie, then, implies a breakdown of the normative order at the societal level, and a loss of social anchorage for the individual. These assumptions involve the specification of an intervening variable, social anchorage. To the extent that a society provides a normative order to orient its membership, it is functional and perhaps even crucial to man's feeling of well-being.

It is this set of assumptions that seem to underly the theories presented here. Durkheim considers the moral function of society to be the provision of a set of regulatory mechanisms to constrain man's limitless passions. Similarly, Srole considers those individuals who are malintegrated into the cultural mainstream of their society as anomic. McClosky and Schaar, following MacIver, deem those persons as anomic who have not learned the norms of their society, and who, therefore, will feel that "the world and oneself are adrift, wandering, lacking in clear rules and stable moorings."<sup>23</sup> Anomie, for Merton, is a loss of legitimacy for the normative structure, while Fromm stresses the necessity for a shared culture and shared values as a defense against "moral aloneness."

But the question still remains: why should social disorientation create emotional discomfort and a tendency toward avoidance behaviour? Few of these theories explicitly address this question. For example,



McClosky and Schaar go to considerable lengths to demonstrate the negative relationship between one's propensity to hold anomic beliefs and one's ability to learn the norms; yet nowhere do they explain why this inability, or the holding of such beliefs should affect one's feeling of well-being in the affective sense. Why does the disoriented anomic individual feel emotional stress?

Among those theories which do deal with this matter, at least a partial explication emerges involving the individual's acquisition of meaning and predictability through the normative order. Certainly these themes are not foreign to the theories we have examined. Thus both the proposals of Srole and of McClosky and Schaar emphasize the role of the anomic individual's beliefs that social events and behaviour no longer seem to conform to social norms or expectations, and that there seems to be no meaning or purpose to social interaction. Similarly, Durkheim has noted a sense of meaninglessness among anomie victims as a major consequence of the societal condition. Unlike these other authors, however, he proposed a rationale for this phenomenon in terms of human needs. He implies that for the individual meaning derives from a sense of direction and purpose in pursuit of realistic objectives. Left unrestricted by societal regulation, the individual will aspire to achieve the limitless number of goals that reflect his needs. However the pursuit of goals which are infinite does not allow the individual to perceive a purpose or direction for his actions and thus his life loses meaning for him. Moreover, Durkheim contends that no individual can be happy if his needs remain unsatisfied, and therefore concludes that society must impose restrictions upon these aspirations based on



the means available for goal-acquisition. That is, societal order permits need satisfaction which is conducive to happiness; or, the lack of a "normative order" produces need-deprivation which implies emotional stress.

It should be evident that Durkheim's assumptions about needs and their relationship to emotional stress bear a close resemblance to later theories involving "psychic homeostatis," or equilibrium with respect to tension and need satisfaction.<sup>24</sup> It is argued in fact that such an assumption represents a basic articulated or unarticulated tenet of anomie theories; that is, social order provides an environment within which individual needs can find adequate expression and satisfaction. For Fromm, this social order is represented by common values, ideas or social patterns. This commonality, by itself, provides a satisfactory (although not necessarily "healthy") solution to an inevitable need of the individual to avoid recognition of his unique and isolated existence. The need emerges first with the dissolution of a childhood order, or, in Fromm's terms, the severance of childhood "primary ties."<sup>25</sup> "Moral aloneness" results when a commonality of needs is not properly established with the society, and the individual becomes aware of his isolation, his powerlessness and his insignificance.

In de Grazia's theory of anomie, order in the form of a belief-system provides the individual with a confidence that his basic needs will be satisfied. When this confidence is lacking, separation-anxiety results for the environment is no longer controlled and predictable. Belief-systems, then, satisfy a derived need for security. Need-deprivation occasions the stress of anxiety.



Although Robert Merton does not specifically deal with the function of a "normative order," we find in his treatment of the individual anomia condition a recurrence in analogous social terms of the assumption stated above. The individual thus experiences emotional stress when obstacles confront his pursuit of social status. According to Merton's discussions, it is clear that these obstacles may take different forms. His major thesis concerns the obstacle presented by behavioural norms which do not make the status goals common to the society accessible to all individuals. But he also deals with the phenomenon of "success-anomia"<sup>26</sup> that involves experiencing Durkheimian confusion and meaninglessness when the concretization of status itself becomes illusive. The uncertainty, insecurity or unpredictability that Merton sees as characterizing social relationships in anomic societies render the individual incapable of calculating adequate and socially acceptable means to achieve the status goal. That is, the definition of "socially acceptable" may itself be in doubt and threats to one's basic security in the pursuit of a goal may render any action inadequate in an unpredictably violent society.

Employing the terminology of Christian Bay, we might characterize the relationship between social order and the needs (wants, desires, value commitments) of the individual as underlying a basic need for security in interactions with the environment. Bay defines security as "the actual or perceived probability of the extension over time of the enjoyment of other values."<sup>27</sup> I have attempted to demonstrate in the past few pages that anomie theorists see the provision of such a basic sense of security in social relations to be a proper function of



the social order, however it is defined. The existence of social order permits the individual both to define his social goals and to map out his actions for achieving them. In a consummatory sense, the social order provides a meaning for action, and in an instrumental sense, it provides predictability.

In recapitulation, then, I have attempted to argue that anomie theories have been built upon a common set of assumptions which refer to the individual's relationship to his social surroundings. More specifically, the condition of anomie implies a disorientation of the individual associated with the breakdown of the patterned order of events in his environment. Because this patterned order of events is assumed to provide a requisite environmental stability by which adequate means for basic need satisfaction can be defined and calculated, the breakdown in stability creates a need-deprivation with respect to the derived need for security. A breakdown in order is accompanied, therefore, by emotional stress and tension at the individual level.

Before concluding this discussion, it is necessary to take up a point, previously by-passed, concerning the relationship of societal anomie to the individual condition. The preceding summary is an interpretation which places primary emphasis on the individual condition. I would contend that this interpretation is an accurate reflection of the meanings for the treatments I have examined. Moreover, it should be noted that sociological conceptions of a societal normative order are not precluded by this interpretation. In terms of functional significance, it makes little difference whether one treats the patterned order of societal events as a macro societal construct or as an order



imposed upon society by the individual.

However, Robert Merton would argue that there are two separate and independent concepts involved here: the individual condition which I have called anomie and which he would call anomia, and the societal state of anomie. While it is clear that the two concepts reference different kinds of conditions, it is not at all clear that these two conditions are independent of one another. I would argue that societal anomie derives theoretically from individual anomie, and, in the interests of parsimony, should not separately be conceptualized.

To point this up, it may prove useful to review my interpretation of Merton's revised causal relationship associating societal malintegration, societal anomie, anomia, and deviant behaviour.

1. Malintegration of the norms and values produces frustration and tension in those members of the society most subject to this norms-values disjunction.
2. Frustration and tension acts for some of these affected members as a stimulant to avoidance, and perhaps deviant, behaviour.
3. Deviant behaviour by these persons produces insecurity and fear for all members of the society.
4. Deviant behaviour also produces uncertainty for societal members in determining legitimate standards of goal-oriented conduct.
5. Insecurity and uncertainty generate a greater incidence of deviant behaviour in the society.

It would appear that Step 1 of this process specifies a societal condition capable of creating a "strain towards" anomie. Steps 2-5 trace the processes of "anomia diffusion" in a society.<sup>28</sup> While it is evident that Merton is attempting to describe a state of social



relations in society, the situation he describes does not appear qualitatively different from that derived by merely aggregating conditions of individual anomie.

In his latest statement,<sup>29</sup> Merton presents a curious example to support his claim that separate concepts are needed. Thus he suggests that, as more individuals in a society fall victim to the anomia condition there is an increasing propensity for these anomics and for their non-anomic neighbours to engage in deviant behaviour. He concludes, therefore, that this example serves "to bring about the possibility that people with like degrees of anomia will behave differently within different contexts of anomie."<sup>30</sup>

While this example may support the claim that anomie and anomia possess qualitative differences which precludes the derivation of one from the other, it would do so only if more established and generalized theories could not account for the same phenomenon. As Clinard points out, however, cultural theories in terms of role expectations, imitated actions of significant others, and other inter-actional effects may very well account for the differential deviance rates.<sup>31</sup> In addition, the presence of deviant behaviour, as Merton concedes in response to a criticism by Albert Cohen, does not itself indicate the presence of anomie: "The foregoing theory. . .is designed to account for some, not all, forms of deviant behaviour."<sup>32</sup> It is that deviant behaviour which results when individuals perceive a lack of norm legitimacy, for which he is attempting to account. I would suggest, therefore, that Merton's model of societal anomie merely describes the proliferating process of individual anomia. There is nothing about his societal concept of



anomie that cannot be derived from the inter-actional effects surrounding individual anomia. The converse, however, is not necessarily true. That is, it may be impossible to explain individual differences in occurrence of the condition within societies or within socio-economic strata, employing the societal anomie concept.

In this chapter, I have endeavoured to demonstrate a basic commonality in meaning among existing treatments of the anomie concept. It is apparent, however, that a good deal of this meaning is only implicitly treated by these theorists. That is, they have directed their efforts primarily to an explanation of anomie in social terms, ignoring for the most part, the psychological dynamics involved. Only Erich Fromm and Sebastian de Grazia have attempted to account for the motivational aspects of the condition, and their explanations appear tailored to the particular purposes of their writing. The following chapter, then, will attempt to restate the meaning of anomie, remaining within the parameters set by previous users of the term, but concentrating on those psychological aspects of the individual which provide the setting for anomic reactions to the environment.



### Footnotes, Chapter III

<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the clearest statement of this position can be found in the works of Carl Hempel although he does not explicitly use the terms "formalistic" or "network" theory of meaning. See, for example, Carl Hempel, "The Theoretician's Dilemma," Aspects of Scientific Explanation, ed. C. Hempel (New York: The Free Press, 1965), pp. 173-228; and Carl Hempel, "A Logical Appraisal of Operationalism," ibid., pp. 123-134. For a lucid discussion of the implications of this and counterpositions, see Edward Madden, "Definition and Reduction," Philosophy of Science, 28 (1961), pp. 390-405.

<sup>2</sup>

As Rudolph Carnap points out, the introduction of theoretical or "hypothetical" constructs by use of observable relations or phenomena is not strictly possible. Rather than "reduction sentences" for this specification, "probabilistic reduction sentences" must be used. See Rudolph Carnap, "The Methodological Character of Theoretical Constructs," Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, ed. Herbert Feigl, Michael Scriven (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), I, pp. 38-76.

<sup>3</sup>

See Robert Merton, "Anomie, Anomia and Social Interaction: Contexts of Deviant Behaviour," Anomie and Deviant Behaviour, ed. Marshall B. Clinard (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1964), pp. 228-230.

<sup>4</sup>

For a brief description of these adaptations, see above. p. 22.

<sup>5</sup>

See Robert MacIver, The Ramparts We Guard (New York: MacMillan Co., 1957), pp. 84-87.

<sup>6</sup>

See Leo Srole, "Social Integration and Certain Corollaries," American Sociological Review, 21 (1956), pp. 709-716.

<sup>7</sup>

See Herbert McClosky and John Schaar, "Psychological Dimensions of Anomie," American Sociological Review, 30 (1965), pp. 14-40.

<sup>8</sup>

See Emile Durkheim, Suicide, trans. George Simpson, John Spaulding (New York: The Free Press, 1947).

<sup>9</sup>

See Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom (1941; rpt. New York: Avon Books, 1955).

<sup>10</sup>

See David Riesman et al., The Lonely Crowd (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), pp. 217ff.



<sup>11</sup> Merton, op. cit., p. 227.

<sup>12</sup> McClosky and Schaar, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>14</sup> Srole, op. cit., p. 712.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 713.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 713.

<sup>17</sup> Fromm, op. cit., pp. 34-36.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 37-38.

<sup>19</sup> de Grazia, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>20</sup> See above, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> See above, p. 23.

<sup>22</sup> See Gordon Rose, "Anomie and Deviation: A Conceptual Framework for Empirical Studies," The British Journal of Sociology, 17 (1966), pp. 31-32.

<sup>23</sup> McClosky and Schaar, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>24</sup> A large number of psychological theories have incorporated this aspect or notion into their accounts of personality. See, for example, Talcott Parsons, The Social System (New York: The Free Press, 1951); Kurt Lewin, Resolving Social Conflicts (New York: Harpers, 1948), ch. 8; H. A. Murray, Explorations in Personality (New York: Oxford Press, 1938).

<sup>25</sup> Fromm, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>26</sup> Merton, op. cit., pp. 219-222.

<sup>27</sup> See Christian Bay, The Structure of Freedom (New York: Atheneum Press, 1958), pp. 19-20.



28

For a description of the "second-order" deviance implied by stages 3-5 in the text, see R. K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 179-180.

29

Merton, "Anomie, Anomia and Deviant Behaviour," op. cit., pp. 228-230.

30

Ibid., p. 230.

31

See Clinard's extended discussion of alternative explanations in M. B. Clinard, "The Theoretical Implications of Anomie and Deviant Behaviour," in M. B. Clinard, Anomie and Deviant Behaviour (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1964), pp. 23-33.

32

Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, p. 179. For the original criticism by Cohen, see Albert K. Cohen, Delinquent Boys (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955).



## Chapter IV

### Anomie as Security Pattern Malfunction

The history of anomie theory, as is evident from the preceding analysis, can be traced almost exclusively through the domains of sociology and social psychology. As a consequence, efforts at specifying its empirical referents have emphasized the individual's conscious subjective perceptions and feelings about society, or their objective counterparts within society. Theoretical analyses have in turn attempted to isolate social and psychological forces which may produce such feelings. Upon closer examination, however, the phenomena in question would appear to evoke academic interest in the anomie context only when accompanied by some form of subjective anguish and suffering, or by the objective behavioural reactions to those conditions. The suggestion was made in the previous chapter that anomie theorists have assumed (implicitly for the most part) the presence of a functional relationship between mechanisms of environmental regulation and the individual's feelings of well-being. Anomie would seem to result when these mechanisms fail to provide an adequate basis for social order. The individual would appear to need this social order. However, the functional relationship between order and well-being has seldom been adequately explicated. In this chapter a framework is proposed within which these psychological aspects of anomie can be understood.

In approaching this task, it seems evident that a social psychological frame of reference does not by itself deal adequately with the



underlying and perhaps unconscious aspects of need satisfaction and deprivation. At the same time, it would appear that anomie can best be understood in terms of the relationship between individual needs and the individual's orientation to his surroundings. What is needed is an approach that successfully "straddles" the domains of social psychology and depth psychology to reveal the motivational framework underlying social perceptions and behaviour.

It is suggested that a frame of reference proposed by Erik Erikson<sup>1</sup> provides a convenient departure point for this undertaking. For Erikson has explicitly addressed in his writings the relationship of the cultural environment to the conscious and unconscious aspects of personality. His concept of "identity" with reference to the individual is a notion explicitly designed to bridge the gap between approaches concentrating on social expressions of personality and approaches dealing primarily with the constitutional givens of the psyche. Emphasizing this usage of the term, he cautions that:

. . . it would obviously be wrong to let some terms of personology and of social psychology often identified with identity or identity confusion - terms such as self-conception and self imagery . . . role ambiguity or role loss - take over the area to be studied . . . . What these approaches as yet lack, is a theory of human development which attempts to come closer to something by finding wherefrom and whereto it develops. . . .

The traditional psychoanalytic method, on the other hand cannot quite grasp identity because it has not developed terms to conceptualize the environment. Certain habits of psychoanalytic theorizing, habits of designating the environment as "outer world" or "object world" cannot take account of the environment as a pervasive actuality. . . . One methodological precondition, then for grasping identity would be a psychoanalysis sophisticated enough to include the environment; the other would be a social psychology which is psychoanalytically sophisticated. . . .<sup>2</sup>



The frame of reference which Erikson employs draws heavily from ego psychology. While acknowledging Freud's major concepts, he concentrates his attention on the developing functions of the ego in its relationship to conscious and social experience. "The ego," he writes, "is an 'inner institution' evolved to safeguard that order within individuals on which all outer order depends."<sup>3</sup> The role of that "inner institution," as generally accepted by Freudian and ego psychologists alike, is that of an organizer, mediator, synthesizer, and decision-maker between biological needs and impulses and socially derived needs and demands.<sup>4</sup> Erikson would seem primarily interested in the organizing and synthesizing processes by which the ego accommodates, shapes, and is shaped by social reality, thereby producing a coherent image of the conscious or preconscious self in adulthood. Identity refers, therefore, to a patterned mode of mental functioning which embraces all levels of consciousness. As he asserts, identity is manifest at the conscious level in

. . . an awareness of the fact that there is a self-sameness and continuity to the ego's synthesizing methods, the style of one's individuality, and that this style coincides with the sameness or continuity of one's meaning for significant others in the immediate community.<sup>5</sup>

Elsewhere, he adds that

. . . it is a configuration gradually integrating constitutional givens, idiosyncratic libidinal needs, favoured capacities, significant identifications, effective defences, sublimations, and consistent roles.<sup>6</sup>

Identity is thus more than a conscious and integrated self-image.<sup>7</sup> It is a constellation of ego "decisions" which forms a patterned correspondence between need gratification and social



institutions. The need for such a synthesis is continuously present and variously satisfied through childhood, but the "final" identity formation stage is reserved for that developmental period when mental and locomotive faculties are fully developed and when the individual has been exposed to the demands of adulthood. Thus, the identity synthesis which emerges at this stage is presumably of an enduring nature, capable of coping with the social environment on its own terms while ensuring need gratification.<sup>8</sup>

Although Erikson devotes considerable attention to the developmental epigenesis of identity, the formation of which is posited to culminate in late adolescence, we shall be primarily concerned with the function it performs in adulthood: that of providing a stable environmental orientation for the continued satisfaction of basic and derived needs. Eventually, of course, our interest is in the consequences for the individual of inadequate ego functioning. For these purposes, my conceptualization of identity will involve a shift in emphasis, from the epigenetic orientation found in Erikson, to one focussing on the organizing methods of the ego which, in adulthood, yield a cognitive and evaluative orientation to social life.

This aspect of identity, while subsumed by many current terms in the literature, might best be denoted in Rollo May's terminology of a "security pattern."<sup>9</sup> In common parlance, it will refer to those standards, assumed to be true and taken for granted, upon which an individual bases his confidence that needs will continue to be satisfied. Basically, it is confidence in a system of order. As Kurt Reizler describes it,



This scheme of order . . . is a system of rules, principles, and assumptions which are taken for granted. Its structure is complex. Such systems can be very different with respect not only to the content of the rules but also to the structural properties. They are never merely aggregates of habits, inherited or acquired, concerning certain rules for this, and other rules for that, case. They are systems; if they are inconsistent, they pretend to be consistent. They claim to cover every possible case. They order our worlds - the worlds in which we think of ourselves as living, acting, moving.<sup>10</sup>

This security pattern is an integral part of identity. Without it, any awareness of a coherent or unified self would be impossible. For it is held that the self can only be defined in social terms as reflected in social interaction. Such a definition can neither be developed nor tested unless the social environment appears to submit consistently to some basic set of organizing principles.

To explicate the function of a security pattern for the individual, one must examine the psychological conditions which preceded and are associated with its initial formation in childhood. The necessarily inferential nature of data for this early period of infancy is not, of course, a conducive environment for academic consensus, and a good deal of controversy still exists concerning subjective aspects of childhood experience. Fortunately, however, most of these controversial issues can be circumvented for the purposes of this discussion. We are concerned here with the development of a capacity in the child to organize his perceptual world. It is argued that such a capacity develops in response to a need for security.

While it is unclear in the literature at just what age the infant first experiences anxiety,<sup>11</sup> most theorists would affirm the strong



association between anxiety and the discomfort felt when biological needs are unsatisfied.<sup>12</sup> The alleviating agent of this discomfort in most cases is the mother, whose attention tends to guarantee relief and protection. As Christian Bay points out, anxiety in this case may serve a functional purpose in manifesting reactions in the child which alert the mother to his unsatisfied needs.<sup>13</sup> However functional the experience may be in an objective sense, it tends to generate a subjective association, as the child develops a social awareness, between his discomfort or anxiety and his utter vulnerability vis-a-vis the environment; concurrently, he is aware of a dependence upon the mother.

A sketch of the first conception of the world that the child acquires, once he has passed through the time when the self and the environment were a unity, would depict the child as a feeble dweller in an environment made up of uncontrollable, animate, thwarting, and hence, hostile objects.<sup>14</sup>

However, as the mother withdraws her constant attention and as the child's developing locomotive skills permit him an ever widening environment, relief from this infantile anxiety must be found elsewhere if, in her absence, he is not to suffer continually from the condition. Thus Erikson asserts the development of a "trust" within the child that his needs will in fact be satisfied.<sup>15</sup>

The infant's first social achievement then is to let the mother out of sight without undue anxiety or rage, because she has become an inner certainty as well as an outer predictability. Such consistency, continuity, and sameness of experience provide a rudimentary sense of ego identity which depends, I think, on the recognition that there is an inner population of remembered and anticipated sensations and images which are firmly correlated with the outer population of familiar and predictable things and people.<sup>16</sup>



Several aspects of this "achievement" merit further comment. First is the cognitive element of correlation which permits reality testing of new experiences within a framework of "remembered and anticipated sensations and images." Trust or faith, as Erikson points out, is indeed a requisite for the relief of anxiety, but such trust is not conferred indiscriminately upon the environment. At this early age, trust can successfully be built up through the mere recognition of correspondence between past and present images. Correspondence at this point is sufficient, by itself, to constitute "consistency, continuity and sameness" in the child's environment. A lack of correspondence must logically entail renewed anxiety. It is a trust both of the environment to correspond to past images and of the self to recognize the danger potential of present images. As the child develops further, diffuse anxiety is partially displaced by realistic fears to the extent that past images can identify and indicate appropriate responses to threatening objects in the environment.<sup>17</sup>

Secondly, this process involves what Erikson has termed an initial identification with the mother - a process of empathic understanding, functionally analogous to the cognitive correlation above, but serving to equip the growing ego with additional dimensions of the self.<sup>18</sup> To the extent that the child incorporates those aspects of his mother's "goodness" pertaining to the satisfaction of his needs, he unconsciously recognizes some fundament of commonness between the two organisms, and a feeling of mutuality. This object (the parent), in a totally animated world, possesses qualities he needs and admires, qualities which assure his security from anxiety, and ones, therefore, that he internalizes as



an "inner certainty." Her perspective becomes, in a sense, his perspective. Her self-confidence in dealing with the environment is reflected in his capacity to trust that environment. Her conviction in applying child training methods, as Erikson notes, conveys the feeling that, although unpleasant at times, her actions have meaning vis-a-vis his needs.<sup>19</sup> Her casual references to the reasons behind her actions create a vague conception of what "being somebody" implies. In these ways, the child gains a primitive identity, the ideational substance of which reflects the surrounding ethos of the family.

As the child matures, these skills pertaining to image correspondence and parental identification prove inadequate to the task of making his world a familiar environment. Developing faculties increase his physical and social radii, and with this comes an increase in the complexity of his relationships with reality. The "inner certainty" of his parental identification is insufficient for coping with other social contexts. While his parents are able to provide a model for the incorporation of skills necessary for biological need satisfaction, new and unfamiliar selves emerging from sectors of his wider environment once again render the child vulnerable to unpredictable forces.

On the purely physical side, the simple correlation of past and present images becomes insufficient as the sheer number of those images tends toward infinity. Rules of association, approaching an intermediate form of explanation, are necessary to account for their occurrence. Thus a rudimentary understanding of the laws of nature or the rules of logic (to name but two in our particular ethos) constitute principles of association which allow predictability of the physical



and inanimate world.<sup>20</sup> However easily mastered, they are basic to the individual's security pattern and to his identity. Their mastery is essential to the continued satisfaction of biological needs and the security of the bodily self. Through this acquired ego capacity, synthesis and reality testing with regard to new experiences permits the identification of threatening situations so that realistically based fear replaces diffuse anxiety.

Through childhood and early adolescence, the individual's social world is extended beyond the family context and new senses of the self require the development of an ego capacity sufficient to the task of bringing some order to the environment in which these new senses of self emerge. To the extent that aspects of the normative system in each of these social environments are employed by the ego for the satisfaction of basic needs, the need for security will motivate the individual to seek out that set of patterning assumptions which might allow some predictability in that social sphere.<sup>21</sup>

As Bay notes, self-involvements pertaining to interpersonal relations are of equal or greater salience to the individual than those physical or filial self-involvements noted above, but the patterning assumptions involving the development of new "inner certainties" of the earlier child-parent type, are considerably more difficult to fathom.<sup>22</sup> To begin with, they are entirely social in definition and are largely determined through the experience of interaction. Since self-awareness in these different situations emerges through the appraisals of others in the same context, this aspect of identity formation is the task of learning the corresponding rules of appraisal. This process, as



Erikson aptly demonstrates in more than one way, is exceedingly complex.

Identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them; while he judges their way of judging him in the light of how he perceives himself in comparison to them and to types that have become relevant to him. This process is, luckily, and necessarily, for the most part unconscious. . . .<sup>23</sup>

The final stage of Erikson's identity epigenesis is hypothesized to occur in late adolescence.<sup>24</sup> At that time, the individual has attained maturity in both the physical and the neurological senses. Through past identifications, he has developed predispositions for employing the values and mechanisms of social institutions for the gratification of basic needs. Moreover, he has developed an awareness of the range of social demands upon his impending adulthood. Identity formation at this stage involves the integration and co-ordination of social commitment in a manner that appears to be capable both of attracting a measure of social recognition, and of allowing the consistent satisfaction of basic needs.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the process entails the resolution of several conflicting demands of which the individual is vaguely conscious.

The successful solution of this identity conflict is hypothesized to produce a conscious or pre-conscious self-definition which "places" the individual within an ordered social context. Furthermore, the individual is reasonably satisfied that the social pursuits implied by this "placing" will permit him to realize a social potential which is accompanied by a feeling of psychological well-being. If the conscious



aspects of identity are concerned with the individual's recognized self-image, the unconscious components refer to the assumptions which order the social environments within which the individual has "placed" himself. Confidence in this security pattern of assumptions - that it sets the groundwork for calculating "success" in social endeavours - is a prerequisite to the satisfactory development of self-definition. Therefore, it is the security pattern which undergirds our notion of identity.

Among the identity-conscious youth examined in his analysis, Erikson observed that the desire for over-all coherence, consistency, and meaning in the resolution of an identity crisis was often manifested in the search for an "ideology." He asserted that

. . . an ideological system is a coherent body of shared images, ideas, and ideals which, whether based on a formulated dogma, an implicit Weltanschauung, a highly structured world image, a political creed, or, indeed, a scientific creed (especially if applied to man), or a "way of life," provides for the participants a coherent, if systematically symplified [sic], over-all orientation in space and time, in means and ends.<sup>26</sup>

It would seem that the social institution of ideology is not a reflection of the identity itself, but of the individual's security pattern which anchors identity to the social context. For, as Erikson points out, the original infantile development of "trust," which accompanies the achievement of a security pattern in early childhood, often finds its institutionalized social counterpart for security in the ideology of some religious faith.

Religion, it seems, is the oldest and has been the most lasting institution to serve the ritual restoration of a sense of trust in the form of faith



while offering a tangible formula for a sense of evil against which it promises to arm and defend man.<sup>27</sup>

It is my contention that the security pattern concept developed here represents the psychological counterpart to the notion of social order identified as central to theories of anomie. In essence, the security pattern is that internalized set of assumptions about the regulation and meaning of environmental interactions which is described by a normative order. However, the security pattern notion is able to set out quite explicitly what is only alluded to through use of the sociological concept: namely, the nature of the relationship between the presence of order and the individual's feeling of well-being. Order provides security and security involves the confident anticipation of future need satisfaction. If this thesis is tentatively accepted, it would follow that anomie involves the individual's loss of confidence in his security pattern to perform its function.

While the experiential implications of this "crisis" will be explored below, perhaps our understanding of the nature of functioning of a security pattern permits us to specify more fully the conditions which signal its malfunction for the individual. Given the relationships among needs, the security pattern, and social involvement that were discussed above, situations would appear to threaten the adequacy of the security pattern when they conform to either of two basic sets of subjective conditions.

In the first instance, a situation or event will undermine one's confidence in his security pattern if (i) the event cannot be explained within the individual's scheme of order; (ii) its occurrence cannot,



with confidence, be denied; and (iii) it pertains directly to an environment or self-system in which the individual has invested the responsibility for the gratification of his particular needs. In this case the security pattern displays a deficiency in its capability to perform its basic function. It is in the context of this basic function that the threatening aspect of the situation must be understood. Put more precisely, the threat is not seen as directed at need-gratification, per se, but at the security pattern which orders one's environments, and thereby permits a stable and enduring self-orientation for the continued reception of such gratifications. Such a situation can be said to constitute a threat to the individual in the sense that it undermines confidence in the security pattern, thereby rendering the environment unpredictable and unreliable as the vehicle for satisfying needs.

Perhaps one of the clearer examples of this kind of situation can be found in the history of Alberta during the Great Depression. As John A. Irving notes in his account of the Social Credit movement,<sup>28</sup> Albertans were seriously affected by unemployment and lack of purchasing power. At the same time, however, there appeared to be an abundance of goods in the stores. People were not able to find an adequate explanation for their own misfortune given this continued production in an apparently thriving economy. Social Credit offered such an explanation in terms of the monetary system used by bankers and financiers.

It should be noted first that the event in question was inexplicable within the framework of a specific set of assumptions about the dynamics of the economy. The explanation that Social Credit offered required a re-evaluation of certain of these assumptions and thus the



development of a new security pattern. Within this new framework, appropriate action could be taken to cope with the source of the problem. Secondly, the anomic reaction would have been expected only if the individual's security pattern was in fact inadequate to the task of providing an explanation. It is not at all clear that all individuals in a society must hold to the same set of assumptions; thus there might well have been Albertans who did not develop an anomic condition in this instance. Although the following point is perhaps less applicable in this particular example, the possibility also exists that the event in question did not affect some individuals because they were not dependent upon the economic subsystem for the satisfaction of their needs. These implications of my anomie framework among others will be explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

In the second instance, a situation will undermine confidence in the security pattern when (i) the situation pertains to one or more of the environmental self-systems or roles on which the individual depends; (ii) the situation is sensed to be necessary for the continued gratification of some derived needs; and (iii) it is simultaneously sensed to affect in a negative way the continued gratification of other such needs. In this particular instance, the security pattern is affected to the extent that the individual senses a conflict in his final identity solution. The identity itself comes under attack as the exposed inconsistency undermines confidence in the existence of a unified and coherent self. This in turn tends to throw doubt upon the adequacy of the security pattern to provide the screen necessary for identification of dangerous situations.



Here I am referring to a situation in which an event is interpreted with reference to two subsystems of the security pattern assumptions and these interpretations call for conflicting courses of action. Assuming that either course of action will threaten need satisfaction in the other subsystem of involvement, the individual is made aware that his identity solution is inadequate. For example, we might expect an anomic reaction from a businessman whose economic future was dependent upon a business transaction that would imperil his father's economic future. If the filial tie between the two men was close and if no adequate solution was apparent, the businessman might begin to question the economic system that called for this type of action. However, assuming also that he was deeply committed to the values of the economic system, this questioning would most probably result in considerable emotional discomfort.

From previous discussions concerning the functional significance of the security pattern for the individual, the subjective experience associated with this condition would tend to center upon the individual's interpretation of his relationship to his surroundings. Events in those surroundings no longer appear stable and predictable; the frame of reference within which those events could once be understood, has demonstrated its inadequacy in the past and is therefore unreliable. But the interpretation of these events was seen to have important implications for the individual's feeling of well-being. Interpretation permitted a stable self-definition in social terms, an over-all meaning for the dynamics of the social and physical environment, and confidence in one's ability to calculate appropriate means



for the gratification of derived needs. Without confidence in one's interpretation of events, we might expect, therefore, that the individual would tend to experience the sense of drifting or lack of social anchorage which was emphasized by MacIver and by McClosky and Schaar.<sup>29</sup> In addition, we might expect a sense of meaninglessness in the interpretation of one's actions and the actions of others. For the meaning which one "reads" into his social existence is implied by the particular ordering assumptions which define that existence. That is, if the individual doubts the validity of his security pattern as a permanent and functional interpretation of his social interactions, he may very well doubt the conscious reasons for engaging in those interactions; namely, the values and norms to which he has committed himself. Finally, we might expect a sensed loss of relatedness to the social environment, a sense of isolation or loss of mutuality deriving from the severance of ties to community values and standards.

Yet these experiential themes reflect only the cognitive and evaluative dimensions of the condition. Perhaps a more important consequence of security pattern inadequacy is the implication for one's affective condition. For the security pattern was seen to order an environment within which patterns of need satisfaction could reasonably be calculated and the satisfaction of such needs be anticipated. The breakdown of that order renders the environment unpredictable and potentially dangerous with respect to the individual's required need gratification. At the same time, the individual senses his isolation and utter powerlessness before these environmental forces. A number of writers have posited the manifestation of this insecurity by an



affective reaction of fear.<sup>30</sup> Note for example the following first hand report by Paul Tillich concerning the atmosphere in Europe during the interwar period.

First of all a feeling of fear or, more exactly, of indefinite anxiety was prevailing. Not only the economic and political, but also the cultural and religious, security seemed to be lost. There was nothing on which one could build; everything was without foundation. A catastrophic breakdown was growing in everybody. A freedom that leads to fear and anxiety has lost its value; better authority with security than freedom with fear.<sup>31</sup>

The concept of fear has not yet been precisely defined, but most theorists would agree, I believe, that fear is an emotional response to the sensed apprehension of danger.<sup>32</sup> Most theorists would also agree that the experience of fear can vary in intensity. However, a breakdown or sensed inadequacy in the security pattern need not necessarily involve an immediate threat or danger to the individual. Whereas fear is ordinarily associated with an objective source of danger, the fear arising in this case would seem to correspond to a "fear of fears," a state of apprehension brought about by the sensed incapacity of the individual to anticipate and cope with situations which threaten need satisfaction. In this sense, it is an unobjective danger which is diffused to the environment as a whole.

It is this quality of the experience, I suggest, which corresponds to the affective component of anomie and sets anomie apart from cognate concepts. Part of the mystique surrounding the so-called anomic experience derives, I believe, from the non-obvious or seemingly abstract nature of fear-inducing stimuli. As we have seen in descriptions of the condition, the individual manifests insecurity, but



seldom is the source of his insecurity identified. Several theorists whom I have quoted refer to this state of the individual as an anxiety condition,<sup>33</sup> where anxiety is differentiated from fear by the absence of an explicit threat. Reflecting the essence of this thesis, Rollo May asserts that:

However uncomfortable a fear may be, it is experienced as a threat which can be located spatially and to which an adjustment can, at least in theory, be made. The relation of the organism to a given object is what is important, and if that object can be removed, either by reassurance or appropriate flight, the apprehension disappears. . . .

The special characteristics of anxiety are the feelings of uncertainty and helplessness in the face of danger. The nature of anxiety can be understood when we ask what is threatened in the experience which produces anxiety. The threat is something in the "core of essence" of the personality. Anxiety is the apprehension cued off by a threat to some value which the individual holds essential to his existence as a personality.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly Christian Bay notes that:

"Anxiety" is a state of apprehension or uneasiness expressing a sensation of a danger that is not perceived, diffusely perceived, or imaginary. "Fear" is a state of apprehension or uneasiness in response to a realistically perceived, specific danger.<sup>35</sup>

These writers have attempted to argue that a qualitative difference exists between anxiety and fear; that anxiety is a reaction to an ill-defined threat, which gains in felt intensity precisely because of this lack of definition. However, this issue is far from resolved, and thus I will consider May's discussion as merely a description of the fear-like experience that is posited to accompany anomie. Such a conclusion would seem entirely consistent with the functional



significance of the security pattern, with the perceptual themes posited to accompany security pattern inadequacy, and with the posited insecurity of anomic individuals.

In this chapter, the thesis has been proposed that anomie can best be understood as a malfunction of the individual's security pattern. Its incapacity to provide a satisfactory basis for understanding external events is posited to cause the individual to lose confidence in its validity. As a result, the individual tends to doubt the frame of reference within which the "self" is defined and, in addition, is denied a basis upon which to secure future need satisfactions. The perceptual themes of anomie regarding the order of society and the individual's position within it, are asserted to follow directly from the lack of a stable basis of orientation, viz., the lack of a security pattern on which the individual can depend. The "emotive" component of anomie is a fear-like reaction to the environmental instability or unpredictability upon which the individual is dependent for need satisfaction. In the next chapter, we will assess the degree to which this psychological model can subsume the causal explanations offered by previous anomie theorists.



#### Footnotes, Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup> See Erik Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1968); and Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1963).

<sup>2</sup> Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, pp. 23-24.

<sup>3</sup> Erikson, Childhood and Society, p. 194.

<sup>4</sup> Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> In Erikson's treatise, he fails to give an adequate account of what is and is not a basic need. On this point, I have chosen to follow Christian Bay's example in avoiding a list of such dispositions. As he notes, however, needs deriving from the superego are just as basic as those associated with the id. See Christian Bay, The Structure of Freedom (New York: Atheneum Press, 1958), p. 171.

<sup>9</sup> See Rollo May, The Meaning of Anxiety (New York: Ronald Press, 1950), pp. 191-192.

<sup>10</sup> Kurt Reizler, "The Social Psychology of Fear," Identity and Anxiety, ed. Maurice Stein, et al. (New York: The Free Press, 1960), p. 151.

<sup>11</sup> For a concise discussion of the different points of view, see May, op. cit., pp. 200-208.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 132; see also Sebastian de Grazia, The Political Community: A Study of Anomie (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 9-10; see also Bay, op. cit., p. 163.

<sup>13</sup> Bay, op. cit., p. 167.



<sup>14</sup> de Grazia, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, pp. 96-107.

<sup>16</sup> Erikson, Childhood and Society, p. 247.

<sup>17</sup> See Bay, op. cit., p. 165.

<sup>18</sup> See Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, p. 105.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>20</sup> Reizler, op. cit., pp. 152-153.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>22</sup> See Bay, op. cit., p. 168.

<sup>23</sup> Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, pp. 22-23.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 128-135.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 163-165.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 189-190.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>28</sup> See John A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959).

<sup>29</sup> See Robert MacIver, The Ramparts We Guard (New York: MacMillan Co., 1957), p. 84; see also Herbert McClosky and John Schaar, "Psychological Dimensions of Anomy," American Sociological Review, 30 (1965) p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Perhaps the most clear statement of this thesis is found in Reizler, op. cit.; see also Bay, op. cit., pp. 67-74.



<sup>31</sup> Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947) p. 245, quoted in May, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Robert W. White, The Abnormal Personality (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1964), p. 192.

<sup>33</sup> See May, op. cit., pp. 206 ff; de Grazia, op. cit.; Bay, op. cit., pp. 67-74.

<sup>34</sup> May, op. cit., p. 191.

<sup>35</sup> Bay, op. cit., p. 68.



## Chapter V

### Anomie and Existing Causal Explanations

The primary concern dealt with in preceding chapters has focussed on setting out a clarification of the meaning themes associated with the concept of anomie. To this end, I have attempted to identify the common themes evident in the anomie literature, and to propose a theoretical framework which captures the essence of what are felt to be basic components of a common meaning for the concept, and which accounts for their interrelations as well. However, this framework merely suggests a psychological context within which the anomic condition might better be understood. The approach does not include, as an integral part of its theoretical trappings, a causal explanation of the anomic condition in terms of identifying specific factors that might threaten the basic security pattern in such a manner as to produce anomie. One criterion, therefore, for assessing its utility to social science is the facility with which it can subsume and perhaps even refine existing causal models. Such an assessment is undertaken at this juncture.

It should be evident from the preceding analyses that the key to understanding anomie in my terms centers on the adequacy of performance exhibited by the security pattern in the attempt at providing a satisfactory interpretation of events in the environment. The dependent variable is "subjective adequacy" as reflected in the individual's confidence in his basic assumptions about reality. We are looking, then, for factors which may affect this confidence.



Stated in this manner, the framework would suggest that a vast variety of factors ranging from the cultural and social on the one hand to the psychological and intellectual on the other could contribute to the "causation" of anomie through some complex interaction. While many theorists have attempted to isolate one factor among these which might account for individual or group differences in the susceptibility for realizing an anomic disposition, empirical phenomena have failed so far to submit to such a simple bivariate model of causation. Only recently, with the contribution of McClosky and Schaar,<sup>1</sup> has a model been proposed which acknowledges the possible multi-variate nature of anomie origin. Criticizing the socio-cultural thesis of R. K. Merton, these authors argue that,

. . . the standard explanatory model is both oversimplified and over elaborate: many of the empirical findings concerning anomy cannot be understood within the terms of the model; and many of the findings can be explained without recourse to the elaborate notions of dysfunction and malintegration employed in the model. Given these considerations, we propose to revise the model so as to approach anomy as a set of learned attitudes and to make more adequate provision for the contribution of psychological factors independently of social structure.<sup>2</sup>

As McClosky and Schaar indicate, previous bivariate causal models are not necessarily misdirected in their identification of contributing factors. They are merely inadequate, by themselves, in accounting for all occurrences of the condition.<sup>3</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this analysis, and beyond the sophistication of this writer to bring all relevant theories to bear upon a security pattern conception of anomie, the following discussion is included to demonstrate the potential capacity of such an approach to subsume valuable contributions



from diverse areas.

The original formulation of an anomie model, as proposed by Emile Durkheim,<sup>4</sup> attempted to account for the differential incidence of anomie in terms of cultural factors. Such factors, he suggested, affect group propensities to anomic behaviour by providing with unequal force across societies and across subcultural sectors of society, the moral constraints to contain man's limitless passions. Placing Durkheim's thesis in the terminology of this paper, one might posit that the ideational content of the security pattern, and of one's identity, is embedded in the social or cultural ethos in which one lives, and is faithfully transmitted to each group member. The ideational content of some group identities, for example, may confer less freedom upon the aspirations of their members than others; or they may permit of supernatural explanations for unusual temporal events where other groups could not tolerate such occurrences. The overall effect of culture, therefore, is to render some group identities over others less impervious to perceived threats to their social modes of satisfying basic needs.

Although few contemporary writers would subscribe to Durkheim's moral function of norms in a society, there is little opposition to his thesis that culture does exert a powerful influence upon the structuring of one's security pattern, and that cultures vary in the ideational content which they transmit. A large literature exists, in fact, which attempts to associate the assumptions of particular societal cultures or particular cultural epochs with one's propensity to experience anxiety, "moral aloneness," and anomie.<sup>5</sup> Rollo May



asserts, for example, that

Contradictions and inconsistencies in a culture make the member of the society more vulnerable to anxiety because they increase the number of situations in which he is unable to decide on an approved course of action.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, Erikson's notion of identity, is very much dependent in structure and content upon the cultural milieu of the developing ego.

For, as we have suggested, the relationship between the organized values and institutional efforts of societies . . . is . . . systematic, and that, from a psychosocial point of view, at any rate, basic social and cultural processes can only be viewed as the joint endeavour of adult egos to develop and maintain, through joint organization, a maximum of conflict-free energy in a mutually supportive psychosocial equilibrium. Only such organization is likely to give consistent support to the egos of growing and grown beings at every step of their development.<sup>7</sup>

The assumption of cultural determination plays an implicit, but important role in the anomie and anomia theories of R. K. Merton.<sup>8</sup> Thus, from his sociological perspective, he assumes that the social and cultural systems of American society have been internalized for the most part by the majority of societal members. Depending on their position in the social structure, however, those members experience differential access to the major social goals (i.e., success). Moreover, to the extent that social norms impede their achievement of these values, members will experience a "pressure" to engage in aberrant, and perhaps deviant, behaviour.

Implicit to this framework is the (admittedly) analytical distinction between a hierarchy of values in a society and the institutionalized means for their realization.<sup>9</sup> The anomie framework proposed in



this paper assumes neither the universal "aspirational reference" among societal members, nor the analytical distinction between values and norms. Rather the "identity" concept combines both structures within the individual's subjective perspective as the qualities of his environments through which need-based desires can find unconflicting and satisfactory expression. In this context, values and norms might be considered consummatory and instrumental goals respectively, either or both of which the individual may depend upon for gratification. While Merton conceived of anomie as the societal breakdown of norms, and anomia as the individual manifestation of frustration, uncertainty, and anxiety on perception of this societal state, this paper is concerned only with the latter. Individual differences within social strata create differences in the selection of particular social goal-states, and differences in the selection of environments are seen to allow the same event or situation to affect individuals in different ways. Where Merton posits anomic reaction when norms block one's access to socially-valued goals, the framework proposed in the preceding chapter would hypothesize the same reaction only when the individual is committed to adherence to both norms and values as social expressions of his needs. In this case, the individual's perception of an inconsistency in his identity synthesis may lead to identity confusion and a questioning of the entire security pattern. It may also lead to a restructuring of one's self-orientation to avoid the conflict. Any of Merton's four anomic "adaptations," therefore, could successfully and permanently resolve the dilemma, if the social goal in each of these cases (either norms or values) can be replaced in his identity so that the conflict



is avoided.<sup>10</sup>

Merton also posited an anomic reaction in response to the individual's perceptions, (a) that "society" appears ambivalent toward its acceptance of deviant behaviour in pursuit of socially-valued goals; and (b) that the prospect of deviant behaviour in others threatens the individual's safety. In both cases, the norms of society are uncertain and his environment becomes unpredictable. The security pattern framework would suggest the interpretation that both situations are unexplainable within the context of one's security pattern, thereby exposing its inadequacy. The reaction is again dependent upon inclusion of the specified environment within the identity's self-orientation, and upon a commitment to institutionalized norms of behaviour.<sup>11</sup>

The anomie framework of Robert Merton, therefore includes both of the security pattern malfunctions identified in the previous chapter. For some individuals, an inconsistency exists within their identity solutions such that their commitment to one personal goal-state involves the abandonment of another. For others in the society, unexplained deviance, or society's apparent acceptance of that deviance, jolts the individual's sense of security in an ordered society. Merton isolates, as the basic or underlying factor in both instances of anomie, the inconsistencies or the contradictions in the culture of an American society which imposes an aspirational frame of reference upon some members which is almost unachievable within the given normative structure. While the identity framework does not preclude this explanation of the phenomena, it does suggest that such an explanation represents "more a caricature than a



portrait" of society (adopting the phrase that Merton himself used in discussing Durkheim's proposal).<sup>12</sup>

Sebastian de Grazia's theoretical treatment of anomie adopts an approach similar to the one suggested in this paper, but implies somewhat different conclusions.<sup>13</sup> The primacy of separation-anxiety in childhood is there seen to render a stable relationship (a "belief-system") between an individual and his environmental "ruler," the mainstay of the former's security and the basis of his orientation to the external world. Therefore, anomie is represented as the subjective reaction of separation-anxiety (or its apprehension) when the given individual-ruler relationship breaks down or threatens to break down. While the importance of separation-anxiety in childhood is acknowledged by the present writer, the childhood solution to this problem, as I have previously suggested, involves a process of identification with significant others in order to incorporate within the self their mastery of the environment. The incorporated ideational content involved in this mastery is in effect the cultural transmission of basic assumptions about particular environments from generation to generation. While the superego involves the internalization of the demands of significant others, the security pattern and identity of the ego involves an internalization of those qualities of others which one seeks for himself,<sup>13</sup> among which is the power to control the environment. One gains in self-esteem to the extent that this internalization is both successful vis-a-vis control and recognized by significant others. Thus a functioning security pattern in adulthood is designed to preclude the extreme reliance upon some external "ruler"



such as is asserted by de Grazia to be the basis of community. While separation-anxiety may occur in anomie as part of a neurotic regression pattern of the individual, it is not necessarily the essence of the anomic fear-like reaction, and is not necessarily "triggered" by some real or apprehended action of a "ruler". The possibility, not raised by de Grazia, that some individuals may be overly reliant upon the perception of external authority due to problems in the development of their security pattern will be considered below.

It may be concluded from this glance at the contributions of sociological theorists that cultural factors could quite conceivably be involved in any particular instance of anomie; and, as well, that my conceptualization of the condition not only permits of this explanation, but in fact also suggests why all individuals in a particular culture, subculture, or social stratum are not affected by the same event to the same degree. For the pluralistic cultures of the western societies most certainly define the "co-ordinates" within which the identity of a member can develop; but such societies offer a great deal of freedom for selecting within these co-ordinates a particular mode of satisfying self-expression and definition. Thus we are not likely to find a sub-system of societal involvement to which all members are equally committed. It follows also that there are probably few events that would be expected to generate the anomic condition for all members. In this pluralist case, the security pattern would seem very much to be an individual pattern, the possible variations of which are defined generally by the societal culture.

Nonetheless as McClosky and Schaar have argued, it cannot be



assumed that cultural factors are entirely responsible for the anomie problem, or that cultural explanations permit the greatest predictive power in individual cases of anomie. They note that:

By forcing all determinants into a single analytic category - by, so to speak, pouring everything into the same container - nothing can be seen clearly. Far from denying the existence of sociological factors, an attempt to assess the contribution of personality to anomie is a necessary step toward clarifying their real significance.<sup>15</sup>

The theoretical conceptualization of anomie adopted by these authors has previously been subjected to critical examination in this paper. In their proposed causal model of anomie, they introduce a number of independent psychological variables that seem especially relevant to a security pattern approach. Underlying their conceptual scheme is an intervening variable which they term the individual's level of cognitive functioning. Their concept of anomie is linked to psychological variables through this intellectual capacity of the individual. In explicating this notion, McClosky and Schaar assert that the norms of a society must be learned and that an individual's intellectual capacity to organize his cognitions will affect the learning process.

Cognitive incapacity may be a matter of poor native endowment. It may likewise be socially induced, in the sense that the person who has lacked opportunities for education and communication is left without the knowledge and skills needed to understand society. Poor cognitive functioning may also result from various psychological disorders that interfere with rational and realistic thought. Whatever its origin, we expect persons with low cognitive capacity to be more susceptible to anomie than persons with high cognitive capacity.<sup>16</sup>



Following this reasoning, it should be equally true to say that the assumptions underlying societal order for the individual must also be learned and that cognitive incapacities will impair the developmental process of accurate reality-testing yielding a security pattern in adulthood which is inadequate to the task of ever making the environment sufficiently familiar. It may also impair one's ability to synthesize new experiences which require testing through the security pattern. Under the rubric of "emotional factors," McClosky and Schaar have isolated four personality clusters or states which they suggest might impair cognitive functioning and thus impair the learning of norms.<sup>17</sup> Among those considered is the state of anxiety, which, in my framework is considered a fear-like constituent element of anomie phenomena. As such, it is conceptualized here as a subjective reaction and not necessarily as an enduring personality trait. Even though McClosky and Schaar have defined anxiety in a different capacity in their anomie paradigm, their association of anxiety and anomie is essentially the same as that offered here. Consider, for example, the following passage.

. . . [P]ersons who feel generally anxious about themselves - about strength and worth - also typically feel anxious about the external world. Their inner anxiety spills over onto the outer world, and they tend to project upon the outer world the doubts and fears that dominate their own mental life. They see the society as uncertain, confused, lacking in clear standards and direction - in short, as anomic.<sup>18</sup>

The framework set out in this thesis suggests that the theoretical ties which bind the outer world to mental life, viz., identity, also bind anomie and fear.



The authors also argue that the general trait of inflexibility may be a causal factor in the anomie model. They are suggesting, in terms of my framework that the need for security varies in intensity across individuals, and that individual differences in this regard may account for some occurrences of anomie.

Highly inflexible persons tend toward premature cognitive closure and are inclined to restrict the range of alternatives they consider relevant to the handling of a problem. They hang tightly to their established perceptual and cognitive structures and resist changes in their set ways of thought and action; trial and error behaviour, for example is difficult for them. The psychologically inflexible also have a low tolerance of ambiguity. They crave order, fixed patterns, clear and simple alternatives.

The contingencies and diversities of a complex and changing society are highly unsettling to such people, and they tend to extend their need for order and predictability to the society at large. . . . Furthermore, persons in the grip of a powerful need for certainty, are likely to see the world around them as less orderly than it may in fact be.<sup>19</sup>

Inflexibility, as described by these authors, would tend to be a caricature of what I, among a number of others,<sup>20</sup> have asserted to be a universal need for security. To the extent, therefore, that everyone manifests some degree of inflexibility, everyone is also susceptible to the anomic disposition when, for example, social changes become too rapid. As an individual difference variable, however, the trait of inflexibility reflects a quality of one's security pattern which is posited to vary across individuals.

The trait of "low ego strength" is also suggested by McClosky and Schaar to be a contributing factor to the occurrence of anomie.

We have in mind here people who feel psychologically maimed, crippled, and therefore unsightly in their own and others eyes. Typically a person



with low ego strength lacks self-confidence, gains little satisfaction from life and is pessimistic about the future. He often bears a heavy burden of guilt, oppressive for its very vagueness and pervasiveness.<sup>21</sup>

What these authors have referred to as "ego strength" has also been termed "feelings of self-esteem." In effect, it is an appraisal of one's identity in terms of its success in obtaining for the individual both functional pleasure and social recognition. As Erikson notes, ". . . by no means only a narcissistic extension of infantile omnipotence, this self-esteem gradually grows into a conviction that the ego is capable of integrating effective steps toward a tangible collective future, that it is developing into a well-organized ego within social reality."<sup>22</sup> Self-esteem would appear to be closely related to the sense of confidence one has in his security pattern, for these basic assumptions undergird his sense of identity. The anomic individual, therefore, must necessarily possess low self-esteem, and those with low self-esteem are either anomic or bordering on that psychological state. Moreover, the concept of self-esteem, as Christian Bay observes, may provide the researcher with a powerful predictive tool as a "seismograph" of the individual's appraisal of his present identity solution.<sup>23</sup> Low self-esteem would suggest that little in the way of external set-backs would be necessary to threaten his security pattern severely, and thus generate an anomic perspective. Like inflexibility, therefore, self-esteem or ego strength may be thought to reflect a quality of the security pattern which varies across individuals.

Finally, McClosky and Schaar assert that the holding of extreme



views or attitudes would impair social interaction, would cause the individual's partial or total rejection by others and would affect negatively his opportunity to learn the norms of society.<sup>24</sup> Although there is no doubt some truth to this assertion, its inclusion as a major causal variable is somewhat questionable. For, as the authors concede, such beliefs are "associated with various psychopathological states, such as intense anxiety, hostility, and inflexibility. Here the extreme substantive views are really expressions - almost symptoms - of the underlying psychological state, and may be functionally important in satisfying the needs of the personality system."<sup>25</sup> This association and the fact that those "underlying psychopathological states" have already been included in the model, would suggest that the "extreme views" factor is a spurious variable. On the other hand, however, such extreme views may merely be an attitudinal response to the sensation of anomie. It is interesting that the authors have chosen to measure only those extreme views that express the craving for a new political order. One wonders whether anomie would correlate highly with the holding of extreme positions on apolitical matters which are subject to the same kinds of social sanction.<sup>26</sup>

McClosky and Schaar conclude their study with a series of comments which seem thoroughly consistent with the use of a security pattern approach to the study of anomie. For example, they assert that:

Contrary to Srole's claim that anomy reflects mental disturbance only when the latter is "severe," and that social dysfunction is the independent variable producing anomy both with and without psychopathology, we found that personality factors are correlated with anomy at all levels of mental disturbance, and that



they function independently to produce  
 anomy among people in all educational  
 categories and in all sectors of society.<sup>27</sup>

The recognition here that anomie (as normlessness) may be a manifestation of psychopathological states suggests that anomie (as a condition associated with vaguely defined fears) may itself be a psychopathological state meriting a frame of reference which will allow us to bring the contributions of psychopathology to bear upon the problem. It has been argued in this paper that a security pattern approach does little violence to existing sociological interpretations of anomie, while at the same time, opening a door to the substantial contributions of abnormal psychology. The identification of anxiety, or unobjective fear as a constituent element of the anomie experience introduces the strong possibility that the psychoanalytic literature dealing with sources of these fears might well enhance our understanding of individual background factors contributing to the occurrence of anomie.<sup>28</sup> Unlike de Grazia's proposal which posits man's "natural predisposition" to anomie given certain conditions in his social relationships, the present approach would suggest the investigation of differential factors and experiences in childhood which may produce security patterns and identities with differential propensities to anomie. Several resultant personality traits have already been mentioned earlier in this chapter, but their orientation is social psychological and not psychoanalytic. It is in this latter area, therefore, that a potential exists for the systematic exploration of untapped anomie sources.

If the dependent variable in the causal model of anomie may be thought of as the subjective adequacy of the security pattern, this



review of the literature has indicated that adequacy is a general function of two factors. The first of these is the ideational content of the pattern. We have seen that cultural factors may provide assumptions via the socialization process which are inconsistent or simply invalid when applied to the world. These properties of the culture may create problems for all members of the society, or only for selected strata of the society. The ideational content may also be affected by limitations of one's intellectual abilities to develop a consistent and valid set of assumptions. Secondly, structural properties of the security pattern may help to explain individual differences in the occurrence of anomie where the content is essentially the same. As McClosky and Schaar have asserted, such properties of the pattern may reflect underlying personality traits of the individual, which nevertheless place restrictions on the flexibility and strength of the pattern in interaction with the environment.

The preceding pages have merely indicated the adaptability of the security pattern approach for dealing with theoretical proposals from diverse sectors of the social sciences. Nevertheless, I believe that the demonstration is a powerful one in that the common frame of reference developed here subsumes with relative ease a body of literature which hitherto had remained rather disparate. For this reason, it seems reasonable to conclude that the theoretical framework proposed here merits further consideration in efforts to refine and explore relationships connected with the anomie concept.



Footnotes, Chapter V

<sup>1</sup> Herbert McClosky and John Schaar, "Psychological Dimensions of Anomy," American Sociological Review, 30 (1965), pp. 14-40.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> See Emile Durkheim, Suicide, trans. George Simpson, John Spaulding (New York: The Free Press, 1947).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Erik Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1968); Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society (2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1963); Christian Bay, The Structure of Freedom (1941; rpt. New York: Atheneum Press, 1958); Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom (New York: Avon Books, 1965); Rollo May, The Meaning of Anxiety (New York: Ronald Press, 1950).

<sup>6</sup> May, op. cit., p. 186.

<sup>7</sup> Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, p. 223.

<sup>8</sup> See Robert Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957); see especially chapters 3 and 4. For my examination of his thesis, see chapter II of this paper.

<sup>9</sup> See ibid., p. 162.

<sup>10</sup> Merton's four adaptations are "innovation," "retreatism," "ritualism," and "rebellion."

<sup>11</sup> To illustrate this notion, consider the case of two scrupulously honest citizens, both of whom have close family ties, but only one of whom has become actively involved in the local political system. If a scandal involving corruption among civic politicians was made public, we might hypothesize that only the actively involved citizen would be emotively affected and concerned by the revelation. However, if the scandal involved members of both of their immediate families, we would expect both citizens to be personally affected.

<sup>12</sup> See Merton, op. cit., p. 131.



<sup>13</sup> Sebastian de Grazia, The Political Community: A Study of Anomie (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948).

<sup>14</sup> See Bay, op. cit., ch. 4.

<sup>15</sup> McClosky and Schaar, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 27-32.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 28 (my italics).

<sup>20</sup> See Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, p. 31; Erich Fromm, The Sane Society (New York: Rinehart, 1955); and Abraham Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," Twentieth Century Psychology, ed. Phillip Harrington (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1946), pp. 11-12.

<sup>21</sup> McClosky and Schaar, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>22</sup> Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, p. 49.

<sup>23</sup> Bay, op. cit., p. 175.

<sup>24</sup> McClosky and Schaar, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>26</sup> McClosky and Schaar measure the extremity of views on scales of totalitarianism, Fascism, left-wing position and right-wing position. See ibid., pp. 32-33.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>28</sup> See for example works by Alfred Adler, Karen Horney, or Harry Stack Sullivan.



## Chapter VI

### Summary and Conclusion

In this thesis, my treatment of the concept of anomie has been restricted to certain limited objectives. I attempted first to survey the various usages that theorists have proposed for the term "anomie" over the past three quarters of a century. Using this survey as a departure point, I have tried to effect a synthesis of these conceptions. I have argued that theoretical frameworks adopted to explicate the meaning of the concept vary enormously within schools of thought, among schools, and among disciplines. These differences permit vagueness and inconsistency in applying the term. Despite these problems, however, I have defended the claim that there are important commonalities in these usages of the term which allow discussion of a synthesized conception of the condition. The synthesis that I have suggested is based upon a set of assumptions that appear to underly all theoretical treatments of anomie.

In essence, these assumptions concern a functional relationship between the notions of social order and individual need satisfaction. I have attempted to demonstrate that anomie theorists have invariably focussed upon the quality of ordering mechanisms in society or the individual's perceptions of such order. These theorists have held that order provides a basis for the meaningful interpretation of events and for predictability. In this role, order provides a structure within which actions related to need satisfaction may be taken with confidence. Thus anomie has been associated with a lack of order in society or the



perceived lack of order. In addition, anomie has been associated with individual discomfort or anguish; the theoretical relationship between disorder and discomfort would seem to be mediated by the need-deprivation which threatens or results when meaningfulness and predictability are lost.

Employing these assumptions, theorists have conceptualized the condition of anomie in a variety of ways at different levels of analysis. I have argued that a concept of anomie located at the individual level of analysis permits the greatest latitude for examining the interrelationships among those variables discussed above. I have further suggested a theoretical framework for anomie that incorporates those assumptions and that involves an explication of the psychological processes from which the anomic condition is said to derive. Basic to this framework is the notion of a security pattern. I have suggested that the security pattern is a set of fundamental assumptions which the individual holds to be true regarding the dynamics of his social and physical worlds. This set of assumptions serves to impose an order on reality through which the individual can sustain a stable orientation to his environment, or, in other terms, through which he can anchor his identity. More specifically, the pattern provides a meaningful basis for action which permits the individual to calculate and anticipate the means necessary to ensure the satisfaction of his needs. The security pattern is posited to include assumptions about those subsystems of the environment upon which the individual is dependent for need satisfaction. Assuming that the individual's feeling of well-being is largely dependent on the present and the anticipation of



future need gratifications, the individual's confidence in his security pattern to function adequately in this regard is seen as a requisite for feelings of security and well-being.

Anomie is conceptualized, therefore, as an individual condition or state of mind involving necessarily and above all the individual's lack of confidence in his security pattern. The condition may also be characterized by a number of cognitive and evaluative dimensions which reflect the individual's feeling of disorientation with reference to his surroundings. Finally the condition involves an "emotive" dimension of discomfort, insecurity or anxiety.

I have argued that this conception of anomie retains the essential meaning that is common to existing theories of the condition. I have explicitly strived to establish this correspondence to facilitate the tapping of contributions made by these theorists. However there is at least one of their assumptions that I have deliberately relaxed somewhat. In all of the theories discussed here, there is a more or less explicit assumption that the perception of order held by "healthy" members of a society will correspond to some objective notion of a normative order for that society. Clearly Durkheim was critical of his contemporary society for failing to impose a reasonable restriction on its membership. Similarly Merton characterized as anomic adaptations, attitudes and behaviour which contravened the "prevailing" normative order, while Srole attempted to equate anomia with the malintegration of the individual into the mainstream of his society. Finally McClosky and Schaar explicitly assumed that there were norms to be learned and that those who did not or could not learn them were most probably



anomic.

In my opinion, this implicit normative evaluation of those who would question the values and norms of a society is neither necessary to their conceptions nor warranted by their conceptions. Certainly there is nothing intrinsically good about the discomfort and anxiety that the anomic condition involves. However it does not follow that individuals suffering from anomie have necessarily regressed to a poorer state of "health" from a better one. I am suggesting in effect that, from the individual's standpoint, anomie may be one step in the progression to a more consistent and adequate security pattern and identity. For example, would we unquestioningly evaluate negatively the states of mind of those Americans who have been led to question the values and norms of their society in recent years, or of those Germans before the Second World War who would not embrace the values of the prevailing regime? These people might well be or have been anomic, but a negative evaluation would not necessarily be appropriate. Anomie is probably dysfunctional, but not necessarily for the individual; it is dysfunctional for maintaining the status quo in the society. Theorists would appear to have placed primacy on this societal consequence of the condition where my conceptualization refrains from including this emphasis. In Chapter V of this thesis, I discussed the possibility of studying anomie as a psychopathological condition. I would defend this suggestion within the context of traditional abnormal psychology. There may be much we can learn utilizing this theoretical approach about the dynamics and consequences of anomie; but we need not retain the assumption that people with this condition must somehow be reintegrated into



the prevailing culture.

This point raises a question that is considered peripheral to the objectives undertaken in this paper, but that deserves a brief discussion at this juncture. If anomie involves the breakdown of the individual's security pattern, and if there is a need for security satisfied by the presence of this pattern, is anomie not a transitory condition preparatory to the development of a new security pattern and a new identity? Certainly this idea is implied in the discussion of "avoidance reactions" to the condition.<sup>1</sup> We might conclude from the theoretical discussion of anomie merely that the condition is transitory if the "avoidance reaction" triggered by it is a successful means of constructing a new security pattern or of reconstructing the old one. However the theoretical framework developed in this thesis does not address the question of whether the condition can be sustained indefinitely or in what direction the individual may seek a solution. These matters must await further theoretical and empirical investigation.

A second implication of the normative evaluation implicit in previous theories concerns the disposition of those who have not developed a security pattern in conformity with the dominant values and norms of the society. While it is clear that those individuals will not be anomic whose security patterns are adequate and are an internalization of the dominant ethos, it is important to stress that it is the adequacy and not the conformity that is crucial to the anomie concept. For the theoretical framework developed here, it is not at all necessary that an adequate security pattern must entail the individual's integration within society. David Riesman's discussion



of the "autonomous" character type asserts the possibility that an individual may be able to satisfy his needs without embracing and adopting the societal order. It is this point that provides a basis for distinguishing between the concepts of anomie and alienation. While the latter term has suffered even more misuse and abuse in the literature than "anomie," Kenneth Keniston<sup>2</sup> has suggested a conception of the alienation state that appears to set definable and reasonable limits on usage of the term. He notes, "for purposes of clarity, I will reserve the term 'alienation'. . . for an explicit rejection, 'freely' chosen by the individual, of what he perceives as the dominant values or norms of his society."<sup>3</sup> While there still remains some doubt from this statement about interpretation of the term "freely," it is clear that this conception of the alienation state refers primarily to the individual's acceptance or rejection of the societal order. Thus we might assert theoretically that alienates are not necessarily anomic and that those individuals with an anomic perspective are not necessarily alienated. However, this point is made only in passing; its adequate treatment would require a lengthy discussion and is beyond the scope of this thesis.

There are surely many questions of this sort which require attention if the concept of anomie proposed here is to be integrated with the theory and research of cognate areas. In its limited synthesizing capacity, however, this thesis has attempted merely to set the stage for subsequent integration and application of the anomie concept. It has hopefully made some progress in that direction.



Footnotes, Chapter VI

<sup>1</sup>See above, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>See Kenneth Keniston, The Uncommitted: Alienated Youth in American Society (1960; rpt. Dell Publishing Co., 1965).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 455.



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